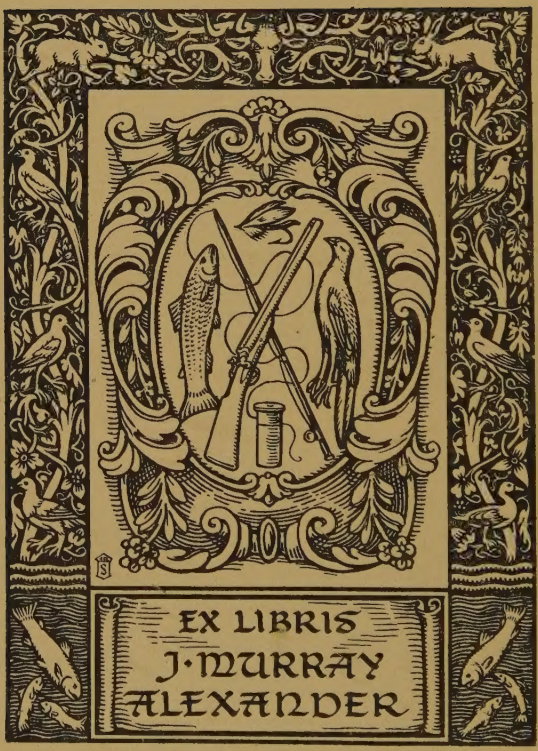
O'NEILL,
Castle Place,
BELFAST.



W. Alexander

THE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.

The fields his Study — Nature was his Book.

Stewart del.t Lizars sc.

Robert Burns—

THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

WITH AN

ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE,

AND

A CRITICISM ON HIS WRITINGS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION

OF

THE SCOTTISH PEASANTRY.

BY JAMES CURRIE, M. D.

A NEW AND COMPLETE EDITION,

WITH

AN ENLARGED AND CORRECTED GLOSSARY.

ABERDEEN:
PUBLISHED BY GEORGE CLARK AND SON.
IPSWICH:—J. M. BURTON.

MDCCCXLVIII.

TO

CAPTAIN GRAHAM MOORE,

OF THE ROYAL NAVY.

When you were stationed upon our coast about twelve years ago, you first recommended to my particular notice the poems of the Ayrshire ploughman, whose works, published for the benefit of his widow and children, I now present to you. In a distant region of the world, whither the service of your country has carried you, you will, I know, receive with kindness this proof of my regard; not perhaps without some surprise on finding that I have been engaged in editing these volumes, nor without some curiosity to know how I was qualified for such an undertaking. These points I will briefly explain.

Having occasion to make an excursion to the county of Dumfries, in the summer of 1792, I had there an opportunity of seeing and conversing with Burns. It has been my fortune to know some men of high reputation in literature, as well as in public life, but never to meet any one who, in the course of a single interview, communicated to me so strong an impression of the force and versatility of his talents. After this I read the poems then published with greater interest and attention, and with a full conviction that, extraordinary as they are, they afford but an inadequate proof of the powers of their unfortunate author.

Four years afterwards, Burns terminated his career. Among those whom the charms of genius had attached to him, was one with whom I have been bound in the ties of friendship, from early life—Mr. John Syme of Ryedale. This Gentleman, after the death of Burns, promoted with the utmost zeal a subscription for the support of the widow and children, to which their relief from immediate distress is to be ascribed; and, in conjunction with other friends of this virtuous and destitute family, he projected the publi-

cation of this volume for their benefit, by which the return of want might be prevented or prolonged.

To this last undertaking, an editor and biographer was wanting; and Mr. Syme's modesty opposed a barrier to his assuming an office for which he was in other respects peculiarly qualified. On this subject he consulted me! and with the hope of surmounting his objections, I offered him my assistance, but in vain. Endeavours were used to procure an editor in other quarters, but without effect. The task was beset with considerable difficulties; and men of established reputation naturally declined an undertaking, to the performance of which it was scarcely to be hoped that general approbation could be obtained, by any exertion of judgment or temper.

To such an office, my place of residence, my accustomed studies, and my occupation, were certainly little suited; but the partiality of Mr. Syme thought me in other respects not unqualified; and his solicitations, joined to those of our excellent friend and relation Mrs. Dunlop, and of other friends of the family of the poet, I have not been able to resist. To remove difficulties which would otherwise have been insurmountable, Mr. Syme and Mr. Gilbert Burns made a journey to Liverpool, where they explained and arranged the manuscripts, and arranged such as seemed worthy of the press. From this visit I derived a degree of pleasure which has compensated much of my labour. I had the satisfaction of renewing my personal intercourse with a much valued friend, and of forming an acquaintance with a man closely allied to Burns in talents as well as in blood, in whose future fortunes the friends of virtue will not, I trust, be uninterested.

The publication of these volumes has been delayed by obstacles which these gentlemen could neither remove nor foresee, and which it would be tedious to enumerate. At length the task is finished. If the part which I have taken, shall serve the interest of the family, and receive the approbation of good men, I shall have my recompense. The errors into which I have fallen are not, I hope, very important; and they will be easily accounted for by those who know the circumstances under which this undertaking has been performed. Generous minds will receive the posthumous works of Burns with candour, and even partiality, as the remains of an un-

fortunate man of genius, published for the benefit of his family, as the stay of the widow, and the hope of the fatherless.

To secure the suffrages of such minds, all topics are omitted in the writings, and avoided in the life of Burns, that have a tendency to awaken the animosity of party. In perusing the following volumes, no offence will be received, except by those to whom the natural erect aspect of genius is offensive; characters that will scarcely be found among those who are educated to the profession of arms. Such men do not court situations of danger, nor tread in the paths of glory. They will not be found in your service, which in our own days, emulates on another element, the superior fame of the Macedonian phalanx, or of the Roman legion, and which has lately made the shores of Europe and of Africa, resound with the shouts of victory, from the Texel to the Tagus, and from the Tagus to the Nile!

The works of Burns will be received favourably by one who stands in the foremost rank of this noble service, and who deserves his station. On the land or on the sea, I know no man more capable of judging of the character or of the writings of this original genius. Homer, and Shakspeare, and Ossian, cannot always occupy your leisure. These volumes may sometimes engage your attention, while the steady breezes of the tropic swell your sails, and in another quarter of the earth, charm you with the strains of nature, or awake in your memory the scenes of your early days. Suffer me to hope that they may sometimes recall to your mind the friend who addresses you, and who bids you most affectionately adieu.

J. CURRIE.

Liverpool, 1*st May* 1800.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is impossible to dismiss this volume* of the correspondence of our Bard, without some anxiety as to the reception it may meet with. The experiment we are making has not often been tried; perhaps on no occasion has so large a portion of the recent and unpremeditated effusions of a man of genius been committed to the press.

Of the following letters of Burns, a considerable number were transmitted for publication, by the individuals to whom they were addressed; but very few have been printed entire. It will easily be believed, that in a series of letters written without the least view to publication, various passages were found unfit for the press, from different considerations It will also be readily supposed, that our Poet, writing nearly at the same time, and under the same feelings to different individuals, would sometimes fall into the s me train of sentiment and forms of expression. To avoid, therefore, the tediousness of such repetitions, it has been found necessary to mutilate many of the individual letters, and sometimes to exscind parts of great delicacy—the unbridled effusions of panegyric and regard. But though many of the letters are printed from originals furnished by the persons to whom they were addressed, others are printed from first draughts, or sketches, found among the papers of our Bard. Though in general no man committed his thoughts to his correspondents with less consideration or effort than Burns, yet it appears that in some instances he was dissatisfied with his first essays and wrote out his communications in a fairer character; or perhaps in more studied language. In the chaos of his manuscripts, some of the original sketches were found; and as these sketches, though less perfect, are fairly to be considered as the offspring of his mind, where they have seemed in themselves worthy of a place in this volume, we have not hesitated to insert them, though they may not always correspond exactly with the letters transmitted, which have been lost or withheld.

Our author appears at one time to have formed an intention of making a collection of his letters for the amusement of a friend. Accordingly he copied an inconsiderable number of them into a book, which he presented to Robert Riddel, of Glenriddel, Esq. Among these was the account of his life, addressed to Dr. Moore. In copying from his imperfect sketches (it does not appear that he had the letters actually sent to his correspondents before him) he seems to have occasionally enlarged his observations, and altered his expressions. In such instances his emendations have been adopted; but in truth there are but five of the letters thus selected by the poet, to be found in the present volume, the rest being thought of inferior merit, or otherwise unfit for the public eye.

In printing this volume, the Editor has found some corrections of grammar necessary; but these have been very few, and such as may be supposed to occur in the careless effusions, even of literary characters, who have not been in the habit of carrying their compositions to the press. These corrections have never been extended to any habitual modes of expression of the Poet, even where his phraseology may seem to violate the delicacies of taste; or the idiom of our language, which he wrote in general with great accuracy. Some difference will indeed be found in this respect in his earlier and in his later compositions; and this volume will exhibit the progrses of his style, as well as the history of his mind. In the Fourth Edition, several new letters were introduced, and some of inferior importance were omitted.

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* Dr. Currie's edition of Burn's Works was originally published in four volumes, of which the following Correspondence formed the second.

LIFE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

THOUGH the dialect, in which many of the happiest effusions of Robert Burns are composed, be peculiar to Scotland, yet his reputation has extended itself beyond the limits of that country, and his poetry has been admired as the offspring of original genius, by persons of taste, in every part of the sister islands. The interest excited by his early death, and the distress of his infant family, has been felt in a remarkable manner, wherever his writings have been known: and these posthumous volumes, which give to the world his works complete, and which, it is hoped, may raise his Widow and Children from penury, are printed and published in England. It seems proper, therefore, to write the memoirs of his life, not with the view of their being read by Scotchmen only, but also by natives of England, and of other countries where the English language is spoken or understood.

Robert Burns was, in reality, what he has been represented to be, a Scottish peasant. To render the incidents of his humble story generally intelligible, it seems, therefore, advisable to prefix some observations on the character and situation of the order to which he belonged—a class of men distinguished by many peculiarities: by this means we shall form a more correct notion of the advantages with which he started, and of the obstacles which he surmounted. A few observations on the Scottish peasantry will not, perhaps, be found unworthy of attention in other respects; and the subject is, in a great measure, new. Scotland has produced persons of high distinction in every branch of philosophy and literature; and her history, while a separate and independent nation, has been successfully explored. But the present character of the people was not then formed; the nation then presented features similar to those which the feudal system and the Catholic religion had diffused over Europe, modified, indeed, by the peculiar nature of her territory and climate. The Reformation, by which such important changes were produced on the national character, was speedily followed by the Accession of the Scottish monarchs to the English throne; and the period which elapsed from that Accession to the Union has been rendered memorable, chiefly by those bloody convulsions in which

both divisions of the island were involved, and which in a considerable degree, concealed from the eye of the historian the domestic history of the people, and the gradual variations in their condition and manners. Since the Union, Scotland, though the seat of two unsuccessful attempts to restore the House of Stuart to the throne, has enjoyed a comparative tranquillity; and it is since this period that the present character of her peasantry has been in a great measure formed, though the political causes affecting it are to be traced to the previous acts of her separate legislature.

A slight acquaintance with the peasantry of Scotland will serve to convince an unprejudiced observer, that they possess a degree of intelligence not generally found among the same class of men in the other countries of Europe. In the very humblest condition of the Scottish peasants, every one can read, and most persons are more or less skilled in writing and arithmetic; and, under the disguise of their uncouth appearance, and of their peculiar manners and dialect, a stranger will discover that they possess a curiosity and have obtained a degree of information, corresponding to these acquirements.

These advantages they owe to the legal provision made by the parliament of Scotland in 1646, for the establishment of a school in every parish throughout the kingdom, for the express purpose of educating the poor; a law which may challenge comparison with any act of legislation to be found in the records of history, whether we consider the wisdom of the ends in view, the simplicity of the means employed, or the provisions made to render these effectual to their purpose. This excellent statute was repealed on the accession of Charles II. in 1660, together with all the other laws passed during the commonwealth, as not being sanctioned by the royal assent. It slept during the reigns of Charles and James, but was re-enacted precisely in the same terms, by the Scottish parliament, after the Revolution in 1696; and this is the last provision on the subject. Its effects on the national character may be considered to have commenced about the period of the Union; and doubtless it co-operated with the peace and security arising from that happy event, in producing the extraordinary change in favour of industry and good morals, which the character of the common people of Scotland has since undergone.

The church-establishment of Scotland happily coincides with the institution just mentioned, which may be called its school-establishment. The clergyman, being every where resident in his particular parish, becomes the natural patron and superintendent of the parish school, and is enabled in various ways to promote the comfort of the teacher, and the proficiency of the scholars. The teacher himself is often a candidate for holy orders, who, during the long course of study and probation required in the Scottish church, renders the time which can be spared from his professional studies, useful to others as well as to himself, by assuming the respectable character of a schoolmaster. It is common for the established schools, even in the country parishes of Scotland, to enjoy the means of classical instruction; and many of the farmers, and even some of the cottagers, submit to much privation, that they may obtain, for one of their sons at least, the precarious advantage

of a learned education. The difficulty to be surmounted arises indeed not from the expense of instructing their children, but from the charge of supporting them. In the country parish-schools, the English language, writing, and accounts are generally taught at the rate of six shillings, and Latin at the rate of ten or twelve shillings per annum. In the town, the prices are somewhat higher.

It would be improper in this place to inquire minutely into the degree of instruction received at these seminaries, or to attempt any precise estimate of its effects, either on the individuals who are the subjects of this instruction, or on the community to which they belong. That it is on the whole favourable to industry and morals, though doubtless with some individual exceptions, seems to be proved by the most striking and decisive experience; and it is equally clear, that it is the cause of that spirit of emigration and of adventure so prevalent among the Scotch. Knowledge has, by Lord Verulam, been denominated power; by others it has, with less propriety, been denominated virtue or happiness: we may with confidence consider it as motion. A human being, in proportion as he is informed, has his wishes enlarged, as well as the means of gratifying those wishes. He may be considered as taking within the sphere of his vision a larger portion of the globe on which we tread, and spying advantage at a greater distance on its surface. His desires or ambition, once excited, are stimulated by his imagination; and distant and uncertain objects, giving freer scope to the operation of this faculty, often acquire, in the mind of the youthful adventurer, an attraction from their very distance and uncertainty. If, therefore, a greater degree of instruction be given to the peasantry of a country comparatively poor, in the neighbourhood of other countries rich in natural and acquired advantages; and if the barriers be removed that kept them separate, emigration from the former to the latter will take place to a certain extent, by laws nearly as uniform as those by which heat diffuses itself among surrounding bodies, or water finds its level when left to its natural course. By the articles of the Union, the barrier was broken down which divided the two British nations, and knowledge and poverty poured the adventurous natives of the north over the fertile plains of England, and more especially, over the colonies which she had settled in the East and in the West. The stream of population continues to flow from the north to the south; for the causes that originally impelled it, continue to operate; and the richer country is constantly invigorated by the accession of an informed and hardy race of men, educated in poverty, and prepared for hardship and danger, patient of labour, and prodigal of life.

The preachers of the Reformation in Scotland were disciples of Calvin, and brought with them the temper as well as the tenets of that celebrated heresiarch. The presbyterian form of worship and of church government was endeared to the people, from its being established by themselves. It was endeared to them, also, by the struggle it had to maintain with the Catholic and the Protestant episcopal churches, over both which, after a hundred years of fierce, and sometimes bloody contention, it finally triumphed, receiving the countenance of government, and the sanction of law. During this long period of contention and of suffering, the temper of the

people became more and more obstinate and bigotted; and the nation received the deep tinge of fanaticism, which coloured their public transactions as well as their private virtues, and of which evident traces may be found in our own times. When the public schools were established, the instruction communicated in them partook of the religious character of the people. The Catechism of the Westminster Divines was the universal school-book, and was put into the hands of the young peasant as soon as he had acquired a knowledge of his alphabet; and his first exercises in the art of reading introduced him to the most mysterious doctrines of the Christian faith. This practice is continued in our own times. After the Assembly's Catechism, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the New and Old Testament, follow in regular succession; and the scholar departs, gifted with the knowledge of the sacred writings, and receiving their doctrines according to the interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Thus with the instruction of infancy in the schools of Scotland, are blended the dogmas of the national church; and hence the first and most constant exercise of ingenuity among the peasantry of Scotland, is displayed in religious disputation. With a strong attachment to the national creed, is conjoined a bigotted preference of certain forms of worship; the source of which would be often altogether obscure, if we did not recollect that the ceremonies of the Scottish Church were framed in direct opposition, in every point, to those of the Church of Rome.

The eccentricities of conduct, and singularities of opinion and manners, which characterized the English sectaries in the last century, afforded a subject for the muse of Butler, whose pictures lose their interest, since their archetypes are lost. Some of the peculiarities common among the more rigid disciples of Calvinism in Scotland, in the present times, have given scope to the ridicule of Burns, whose humour is equal to Butler's, and whose drawings from living manners are singularly expressive and exact. Unfortunately the correctness of his taste did not always correspond with the strength of his genius; and hence some of the most exquisite of the comic productions are rendered unfit for the light.

The information and the religious education of the peasantry of Scotland, promote sedateness of conduct, and habits of thought and reflection.—These good qualities are not counteracted by the establishment of poor-laws, which while they reflect credit on the benevolence, detract from the wisdom of the English legislature. To make a legal provision for the inevitable distress of the poor, who by age or disease are rendered incapable of labour, may indeed seem an indispensable duty of society; and if, in the execution of a plan for this purpose, a distinction could be introduced, so as to exclude from its benefits those whose sufferings are produced by idleness or profligacy, such an institution would perhaps be as rational as humane. But to lay a general tax on property for the support of poverty, from whatever cause proceeding, is a measure full of danger. It must operate in a considerable degree as a bounty on idleness, and a duty on industry. It takes away from vice and indolence the prospect of their most dreaded consequences, and from virtue and industry their peculiar sanctions. In many cases it must render the rise in the price of labour, not a blessing,

but a curse to the labourer; who, if there be an excess in what he earns beyond his immediate necessities, may be expected to devote this excess to his present gratification; trusting to the provision made by law for his own and his family's support, should disease suspend, or death terminate his labours. Happily in Scotland, the same legislature which established a system of instruction for the poor, resisted the introduction of a legal provision for the support of poverty; what they granted on the one hand, and what they refused on the other, was equally favourable to industry and good morals; and hence it will not appear surprising, if the Scottish peasantry have a more than usual share of prudence and reflection, if they approach nearer than persons of their order usually do, to the definition of man, that of "a being that looks before and after." These observations must indeed be taken with many exceptions: the favourable operation of the causes just mentioned is counteracted by others of an opposite tendency; and the subject, if fully examined, would lead to discussions of great extent.

When the reformation was established in Scotland, instrumental music was banished from the churches, as savouring too much of "profane minstrelsy." Instead of being regulated by an instrument, the voices of the congregation are led and directed by a person under the name of a precentor; and the people are all expected to join in the tune which he chooses for the psalm which is to be sung. Church-music is therefore a part of the education of the peasantry in Scotland, in which they are usually instructed in the long winter nights by the parish schoolmaster, who is generally the precentor, or by itinerant teachers more celebrated for their powers of voice. This branch of education had, in the last reign, fallen into some neglect, but was revived about thirty or forty years ago, when the music itself was reformed and improved. The Scottish system of psalmody is however radically bad. Destitute of taste or harmony, it forms a striking contrast with the delicacy and pathos of the profane airs. Our poet, it will be found, was taught church-music, in which, however, he made little proficiency.

That dancing should also be very generally a part of the education of the Scottish peasantry, will surprise those who have only seen this description of men; and still more those who reflect on the rigid spirit of Calvinism with which the nation is so deeply affected, and to which this recreation is so strongly abhorrent. The winter is also the season when they acquire dancing, and indeed almost all their other instruction. They are taught to dance by persons generally of their own number, many of whom work at daily labour during the summer months. The school is usually a barn, and the arena for the performers is generally a clay floor. The dome is lighted by candles stuck in one end of a cloven stick, the other end of which is thrust into the wall. Reels, strathspeys country-dances, and hornpipes, are here practised. The jig, so much in favour among the English peasantry, has no place among them. The attachment of the people of Scotland, of every rank, and particularly of the peasantry, to this amusement, is very great. After the labours of the day are over, young men and women walk many miles, in the cold and dreary night of winter, to these country dancing-schools; and the instant that the violin sounds a Scot-

tish air, fatigue seems to vanish, the toil-bent rustic becomes erect, his features brighten with sympathy; every nerve seems to thrill with sensation, and every artery to vibrate with life. These rustic performers are indeed less to be admired for grace, than for agility and animation, and their accurate observance of time. Their modes of dancing, as well as their tunes, are common to every rank in Scotland, and are now generally known. In our own day they have penetrated into England, and have established themselves even in the circle of Royalty. In another generation they will be naturalized in every part of the island.

The prevalence of this taste, or rather passion for dancing, among a people so deeply tinctured with the spirit and doctrines of Calvin, is one of those contradictions which the philosophic observer so often finds in national character and manners. It is probably to be ascribed to the Scottish music, which, throughout all its varieties, is so full of sensibility, and which, in its livelier strains, awaken those vivid emotions that find in dancing their natural solace and relief.

This triumph of the music of Scotland over the spirit of the established religion, has not, however, been obtained without long continued and obstinate struggles. The numerous sectaries who dissent from the establishment on account of the relaxation which they perceive or think they perceive, in the Church, from original doctrines and discipline, universally condemn the practice of dancing, and the schools where it is taught; and the more elderly and serious part of the people, of every persuasion, tolerate rather than approve these meetings of the young of both sexes, where dancing is practised to their spirit-stirring music, where care is dispelled, toil is forgotten, and prudence itself is sometimes lulled to sleep.

The Reformation, which proved fatal to the rise of the other fine arts in Scotland, probably impeded, but could not obstruct, the progress of its music; a circumstance that will convince the impartial inquirer, that this music not only existed previous to that era, but had taken a firm hold of the nation; thus affording a proof of its antiquity, stronger than any produced by the researches of our antiquaries.

The impression which the Scottish music has made on the people, is deepened by its union with the national songs, of which various collections of unequal merit are before the public. These songs, like those of other nations, are many of them humorous, they chiefly treat of love, war, and drinking. Love is the subject of the greater proportion. Without displaying the higher powers of the imagination, they exhibit a perfect knowledge of the human heart, and breathe a spirit of affection, and sometimes of delicate and romantic tenderness, not to be surpassed in modern poetry, and which the more polished strains of antiquity have seldom possessed.

The origin of this amatory character in the rustic muse of Scotland, or of the greater number of those love-songs themselves, it would be difficult to trace; they have accumulated in the silent lapse of time, and it is now perhaps impossible to give an arrangement of them in the order of their date, valuable as such a recor

of taste and manners would be. Their present influence on the character of the nation is, however, great and striking. To them we must attribute, in a great measure, the romantic passion which so often characterizes the attachments of the humblest of the people of Scotland, to a degree, that if we mistake not, is seldom found in the same rank of society in other countries. The pictures of love and happiness exhibited in their rural songs, are early impressed on the minds of the peasant, and are rendered more attractive from the music with which they are united. They associate themselves with his own youthful emotions; they elevate the object as well as the nature of his attachment; and give to the impressions of sense the beautiful colours of imagination. Hence in the course of his passion, a Scottish peasant often exerts a spirit of adventure, of which a Spanish cavalier need not be ashamed. After the labours of the day are over, he sets out for the habitation of his mistress, perhaps at many miles distance, regardless of the length or the dreariness of the way. He approaches her in secret, under the disguise of night. A signal at the door or window, perhaps agreed on, and understood by none but her, gives information of his arrival; and sometimes it is repeated again and again, before the capricious fair one will obey the summons. But if she favours his addresses, she escapes unobserved, and receives the vows of her lover under the gloom of twilight, or the deeper shade of night. Interviews of this kind are the subjects of many of the Scottish songs, some of the most beautiful of which Burns has imitated or improved. In the art which they celebrate he was perfectly skilled; he knew and had practised all its mysteries. Intercourse of this sort is indeed universal, even in the humblest condition of man, in every region of the earth. But it is not unnatural to suppose, that it may exist in a greater degree, and in a more romantic form, among the peasantry of a country who is supposed to be more than commonly instructed; who find in their rural songs expressions of their youthful emotions; and in whom the embers of passion are continually fanned by the breathings of a music full of tenderness and sensibility. The direct influence of physical causes or the attachment between the sexes is comparatively small, but it is modified by moral causes beyond any other affection of the mind. Of these music and poetry are the chief. Among the snows of Lapland, and under the burning sun of Angola, the savage is seen hastening to his mistress, and every where he beguiles the weariness of his journey with poetry and song.

In appreciating the happiness and virtue of a community, there is perhaps no single criterion on which so much dependence may be placed, as the state of the intercourse between the sexes. Where this displays ardour of attachment, accompanied by purity of conduct, the character and the influence of women rise in society, our imperfect nature mounts on the scale of moral excellence, and from the source of this single affection, a stream of felicity descends, which branches into a thousand rivulets that enrich and adorn the field of life. Where the attachment between the sexes sinks into an appetite, the heritage of our species is comparatively poor, and man approaches the condition of *the brutes that perish*. "If we could

with safety indulge the pleasing supposition that Fingal lived and that Ossian sung," Scotland, judging from this criterion, might be considered as ranking high in happiness and virtue in very remote ages. To appreciate her situation by the same criterion in our own times, would be a delicate and difficult undertaking. After considering the probable influence of her popular songs and her national music, and examining how far the effects to be expected from these are supported by facts, the inquirer would also have to examine the influence of other causes, and particularly of her civil and ecclesiastical institutions, by which the character, and even the manners of a people, though silently and slowly, are often powerfully controlled. In the point of view in which we are considering the subject, the ecclesiastical establishments of Scotland may be supposed peculiarly favourable to purity of conduct. The dissoluteness of manners among the Catholic clergy, which preceded, and in some measure produced the Reformation, led to an extraordinary strictness on the part of the reformers, and especially in that particular in which the licentiousness of the clergy had been carried to its greatest height—the intercourse between the sexes. On this point, as on all others connected with austerity of manners, the disciples of Calvin assumed a greater severity than those of the Protestant episcopal church. The punishment of illicit connexion between the sexes was, throughout all Europe, a province which the clergy assumed to themselves; and the church of Scotland, which at the Reformation renounced so many powers and privileges, at that period took this crime under her more especial jurisdiction.—Where pregnancy takes place without marriage, the condition of the female causes the discovery, and it is on her, therefore, in the first instance, that the clergy and elders of the church exercise their zeal. After examination before the kirk-session touching the circumstance of her guilt, she must endure a public penance, and sustain a public rebuke from the pulpit, for three Sabbaths successively, in the face of the congregation to which she belongs, and thus have her weakness exposed, and her shame blazoned. The sentence is the same with respect to the male; but how much lighter the punishment! It is well known that this dreadful law, worthy of the iron minds of Calvin and of Knox, has often led to consequences, at the very mention of which human nature recoils.

While the punishment of incontinence prescribed by the institutions of Scotland, is severe, the culprits have an obvious method of avoiding it, afforded them by the law respecting marriage, the validity of which requires neither the ceremonies, of the church, nor any other ceremonies, but simply the deliberate acknowledgement of each other as husband and wife, made by the parties before witnesses, or in any other way that gives legal evidence of such an acknowledgment having taken place. And as the parties themselves fix the date of their marriage, an opportunity is thus given to avoid the punishment, and repair the consequences of illicit gratification. Such a degree of laxity respecting so serious a contract might produce much confusion in the descent of property, without a still farther indulgence; but the law of Scotland legitimating all children born before wedlock, on the subsequent marriage of their parents, renders the actual date of the marriage

itself of little consequence. Marriages contracted in Scotland without the ceremonies of the church are considered as *irregular*, and the parties usually submit to a *rebuke* for their conduct, in the face of their respective congregations, which is not, however, necessary to render the marriage valid. Burns, whose marriage it will appear, was *irregular*, does not seem to have undergone this part of the discipline of the church.

Thus, though the institutions of Scotland are in many particulars favourable to a conduct among the peasantry founded on foresight, and reflection, on the subject of marriage the reverse of this is true. Irregular marriages, it may be naturally supposed, are often improvident ones, in whatever rank of society they occur. The children of such marriages, poorly endowed by their parents, find a certain degree of instruction of easy acquisition; but the comforts of life, and the gratifications of ambition, they find of more difficult attainment in their native soil; and thus the marriage laws of Scotland conspire with other circumstance, to produce that habit of emigration and spirit of adventure, for which the people are so remarkable.

The manners and appearance of the Scottish peasantry do not bespeak to a stranger the degree of their cultivation. In their own country, their industry is inferior to that of the same description of men in the southern division of the island. Industry and the useful arts reached Scotland later than England; and though their advance has been rapid there, the effects produced are as yet far inferior, both in reality and in appearance. The Scottish farmers have in general neither the opulence nor the comforts of those of England—neither vest the same capital in the soil, nor receive from it the same return. Their clothing, their food, and their habitations, are almost every where inferior. Their appearance in these respects corresponds with the appearance of their country: and under the operation of patient industry, both are improving. Industry and the useful arts came later into Scotland than into England, because the security of property came later. With causes of internal agitation and warfare similar to those which occurred to the more southern nation, the people of Scotland were exposed to more imminent hazards, and more extensive and destructive spoliation, from external war. Occupied in the maintenance of their independence against their more powerful neighbours, to this were necessarily sacrificed the arts of peace, and at certain periods, the flower of their population. And when the union of the crowns produced a security from national wars with England for the century succeeding, the civil wars common to both divisions of the island, and the dependence, perhaps the necessary dependence of the Scottish councils on those of the more powerful kingdom, counteracted this advantage. Even the union of the British nations was not, from obvious causes, immediately followed by all the benefits which it was ultimately destined to produce. At length, however, these benefits are distinctly felt, and generally acknowledged. Property is secure; manufactures and commerce increasing, and agriculture is rapidly improving in Scotland. As yet, indeed, the farmers are not, in general, enabled to make improvements out of their own capitals, as in England; but the landholders, who have seen and felt the advantages resulting from them, contribute

towards them with a liberal hand. Hence property, as well as population, is accumulating rapidly on the Scottish soil; and the nation, enjoying a great part of the blessings of Englishmen, and retaining several of their own happy institutions, might be considered, if confidence could be placed in human foresight, to be as yet only in an early stage of their progress. Yet there are obstructions in their way. To the cultivation of the soil are opposed the extent and the strictness of the entails: to the improvement of the people the rapidly increasing use of spirituous liquors, a detestable practice, which includes in its consequences almost every evil, physical and moral. The peculiarly social disposition of the Scottish peasantry exposes them to this practice. This disposition, which is fostered by their national songs and music, is perhaps characteristic of the nation at large. Though the source of many pleasures, it counteracts by its consequences the effects of their patience, industry, and frugality both at home and abroad, of which those especially who have witnessed the progress of Scotsmen in other countries, must have known many striking instances.

Since the Union, the manners and language of the people of Scotland have no longer a standard among themselves, but are tried by the standard of the nation to which they are united.—Though their habits are far from being flexible, yet it is evident that their manners and dialect are undergoing a rapid change. Even the farmers of the present day appear to have less of the peculiarities of their country in their speech, than the men of letters of the last generation. Burns, who never left the island, nor penetrated farther into England than Carlisle on the one hand, or Newcastle on the other, had less of the Scottish dialect than Hume, who lived for many years in the best society in England and France; or perhaps than Robertson, who wrote the English language in a style of such purity; and if he had been in other respects fitted to take a lead in the British House of Commons, his pronunciation would neither have fettered his eloquence, nor deprived it of its due effect.

A striking particular in the character of the Scottish peasantry, is one which it is hoped will not be lost—the strength of their domestic attachments. The privations to which many parents submit for the good of their children, and particularly to obtain for them instruction, which they consider as the chief good, has already been noticed. If their children live and prosper, they have their certain reward, not merely as witnessing, but as sharing of their prosperity. Even in the humblest ranks of the peasantry, the earnings of the children may generally be considered as at the disposal of their parents; perhaps in no country is so large a portion of the wages of labour applied to the support and comfort of those whose days of labour are past. A similar strength of attachment extends through all the domestic relations.

Our poet took largely of this amiable characteristic of his humble compeers; he was also strongly tinctured with another striking feature which belongs to them,—a partiality for his native country, of which many proofs may be found in his writings. This, it must be confessed, is a very strong and general sentiment among the natives of Scotland, differing however in its character, according to

the character of the different minds in which it is found; in some appearing a selfish prejudice, in others a generous affection.

An attachment to the land of their birth is, indeed, common to all men. It is found among all the inhabitants of every region of the earth, from the arctic to the antarctic circle, in all the vast variety of climate, of surface, of civilization. To analyze this general sentiment, to trace it through the mazes of association up to the primary affection in which it has its source, would neither be a difficult nor unpleasing labour. On the first consideration of the subject, we should, perhaps expect to find this attachment strong in proportion to the physical advantage of the soil; but inquiry, far from confirming this supposition, seems rather to lead to an opposite conclusion.—In those fertile regions where beneficent nature yields almost spontaneously whatever is necessary to human wants, patriotism, as well as every other generous sentiment, seems weak and languid. In countries less richly endowed, where the comforts, and even necessaries of life, must be purchased by patient toil, the affections of the mind, as the faculties of the understanding, improve under exertion, and patriotism flourishes amidst its kindred virtues. Where it is necessary to combine for mutual defence, as well as for the supply of common wants, mutual good-will springs from mutual difficulties and labours, the social affections unfold themselves, and extend from the men with whom we live, to the soil on which we tread. It will perhaps be found, indeed, that our affections cannot be originally called forth, but by objects capable, or supposed capable, of feeling our sentiments, and of returning them; but when once excited they are strengthened by exercise—they are expanded by the powers of imagination, and seize more especially on those inanimate parts of creation, which form the theatre on which we have first felt the alternations of joy and sorrow, and first tasted the sweets of sympathy and regard. If this reasoning be just, the love of our country, although modified, and even extinguished in individuals by the chances and changes of life, may be presumed, in our general reasonings, to be strong among a people, in proportion to their social, and more especially to their domestic affections. In free governments it is found more active than in despotic ones, because, as the individual becomes of more consequence in the community, the community becomes of more consequence to him; in small states it is generally more active than in large ones, for the same reason, and also because the independence of a small community being maintained with difficulty, and frequently endangered, sentiments of patriotism are more frequently excited. In mountainous countries it is generally found more active than in plains, because there the necessities of life often require a closer union of the inhabitants; and more especially because in such countries, though less populous than plains, the inhabitants, instead of being scattered equally over the whole, are usually divided into small communities on the sides of their separate valleys, and on the banks of their respective streams: situations well calculated to call forth and to concentrate the social affections amidst scenery that acts most powerfully on the sight, and makes a lasting impression on the memory. It may also be remarked, that mountainous countries are often peculiarly calculated to nou-

rish sentiments of national pride and independence, from the influence of history on the affections of the mind. In such countries, from their natural strength, inferior nations have maintained their independence against their more powerful neighbours, and valour, in all ages, has made its most successful efforts against oppression. Such countries present the fields of battle, where tide of invasion was rolled back, and where the ashes of those rest, who have died in defence of their nation!

The operation of the various causes we have mentioned is doubtless more general and more permanent, where the scenery of a country, the peculiar manners of its inhabitants, and the martial achievements of their ancestors are embodied in national songs, and united to national music. By this combination, the ties that attach men to the land of their birth are multiplied and strengthened; and the images of infancy strongly associating with the generous affections, resist the influence of time, and of new impressions; they often survive in countries far distant, and amidst far different scenes, to the latest periods of life, to soothe the heart with the pleasures of memory, when those of hope die away.

If this reasoning be just, it will explain to us why, among the natives of Scotland, even of cultivated minds, we so generally find a partial attachment to the land of their birth, and why this is so strongly discoverable in the writings of Burns, who joined to the higher powers of the understanding the most ardent affections. Let no men of reflection think it a superfluous labour to trace the rise and progress of a character like his. Born in the condition of a peasant, he rose by the force of his mind into distinction and influence, and in his works has exhibited what are rarely found, the charms of original genius. With a deep insight into the human heart, his poetry exhibits high powers of imagination—it displays, and as it were embalms, the peculiar manners of his country; and it may be considered as a monument, not to his own name only, but to the expiring genius of an ancient and once independent nation. In relating the incidents of his life, candour will prevent us from dwelling invidiously on those faults and failings which justice forbids us to conceal; we will tread lightly over his yet warm ashes, and respect the laurels that shelter his untimely grave.

LIFE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS was, as is well known, the son of a farmer in Ayrshire, and afterwards himself a farmer there; but, having been unsuccessful, he was about to emigrate to Jamaica. He had previously, however, attracted some notice by his poetical talents in the vicinity where he lived; and having published a small volume of his poems at Kilmarnock, this drew upon him more general attention. In consequence of the encouragement he received, he repaired to Edinburgh, and there published, by subscription, an improved and enlarged edition of his poems, which met with extraordinary success. By the profits arising from the sale of this edition, he was enabled to enter on a farm in Dumfries-shire; and having married a person to whom he had been long attached, he retired to devote the remainder of his life to agriculture. He was again, however, unsuccessful; and, abandoning his farm, he removed again into the town of Dumfries, where he filled an inferior office in the excise, and where he terminated his life in July, 1796, in his thirty-eighth year.

The strength and originality of his genius procured him the notice of many persons distinguished in the republic of letters, and, among others, that of Dr. Moore, well known for his *Views of Society and Manners on the Continent of Europe*, for his *Zeluco*, and various other works. To this gentleman our poet addressed a letter, after his first visit to Edinburgh, giving a history of his life, up to the period of his writing. In a composition never intended to see the light, elegance or perfect correctness of composition will not be expected. These, however, will be compensated by the opportunity of seeing our poet, as he gives the incidents of his life, unfold the peculiarities of his character with all the careless vigour and open sincerity of his mind.

"SIR, *Mauchline, 2d August*, 1787.

"FOR some months past I have been rambling over the country; but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a

man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment, I will give you an honest narrative; though I know it will be often at my own expense;—for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, except in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble,—I have, I say, like him, *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and like him, too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from a suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

"I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pye-coated guardians of escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted in the Herald's Office; and, looking through that granary of honours, I found there almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

> "My ancient but ignoble blood
> Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood."

Gules, purpure, argent, &c., quite disowned me.

"My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where after many years wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom.—I have met with few who understood *men, their manners, and their ways*, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was a gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. At those years I was by no means a favourite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety. I say *idiot* piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, deadlights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often

takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idel terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, *How are thy servants blest, O Lord!* I particularly remember one half stanza which was music to my boyish ears—

> "For though on dreadful whirls we hung
> High on the broken wave—"

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were, *The Life of Hannibal*, and *The History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

"Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half mad; and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, between sermons, at funerals, &c., used, a few years afterwards, to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue and and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

"My vicinity to Ayr was of some advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modifications of spiritual pride, was, like our catechism-definition of infinitude, *without bounds or limits*. I formed several connections with other younkers who possessed superior advantages, the *youngling* actors, who were busy in the rehearsal of parts in which they were shortly to appear on the stage of life, where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at this green age that our young gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young great man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor insignificant stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who were perhaps born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the *clouterly* appearance of my plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations; and one, whose heart I am sure not even the *Munny Begum* scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction: but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and, to clench the misfortune, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my *Tale of Twa Dogs*. My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children: and he, worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more; and to weather these two years, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly; I was a dextrous ploughman, for my age; and the next eldest to

me was a brother (Gilbert) who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction; but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the recollection of the s——l factor's insolent threatening letters which used to set us all in tears.

"This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn my partner was a bewitching creature a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idoim—she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.* In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion, I cannot tell: you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly; and it was her favourite reel, to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song, which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love! and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moor-lands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself.

"Thus with me began love and poetry, which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain he made was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a difference commencing between him and his landlord, as to terms, after three years tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail by consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in, and carried him away, to *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*

"It is during the time that we lived on this farm, that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period perhaps the most ungainly, awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of

ancient story was gathered from *Salmon's* and *Guthrie's* geographical grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature, and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with *Pope's Works*, some plays of *Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, the Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Directory, Bayle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, a Select Collection of English Songs*, and *Hervey's Meditations*, had formed the whole of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is.

"In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings; and my going was, what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me, he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, in comparison with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of Presbyterian country life: for though the Will o' Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years after within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I had early felt some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of Fortune, was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it;—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance!—Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from active hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that, always where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant a l'adorable moitie du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and as in every other warfare in this world my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared further for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a

love adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesmen in knowing the intrigues of half the courts in Europe. The very goose-feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song; and it is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty, they are matters of the most serious nature; to them, the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious parts of my enjoyments.

"Another circumstance in my life which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty great progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at the time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *filette* who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines*, for a few days more! but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

> 'Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower.'——

"It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the last two nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

"I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis: and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters of the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly; I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings' worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

"My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle,* were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; *Sterne* and *M'Kenzie—Tristram Shondy* and *The Man of feeling*—were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind; but it was only indulged in according to the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other, as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet; None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except *Winter, a Dirge,* the eldest of my printed pieces; *The Death of Poor Mailie, John Barleycorn,* and Songs, first, second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school business.

"My twenty-third year was to me an important era. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring town (Irvine) to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My ————; and, to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes; and I was left like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

"I was obliged to give up this scheme: the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; and what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption; and to crown my distresses, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was, my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*Depart from me, ye accursed!*

"From this adventure, I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor little fellow in dispair went to sea; where after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set ashore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of every thing. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story, without adding, that he is at this time master of a large West Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

"His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course tried to imitate him. In some measure, I succeeded; I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw,

who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief; and the consequence was that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the *Poet's Welcome.* My reading only increased, while in this town, by two stray volumes of *Pamela* and one of *Ferdinand Count Fathom,* which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with *Ferguson's Scottish Poems,* I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us, with which, to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighbouing farm. My brother wanted my hair-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness: but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

"I entered on this farm with a full resolution, *Come, go to, I will be wise!* I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and in short, in spite of *the devil, and the world and the flesh,* I believe, I should, have been a wise man, but the first year from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second, from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned. *like the dog to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

"I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my *Holy Fair.* I had a notion myself, that the piece had some merit: but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. *Holy Willie's Prayer* next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side, within point blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, *The Lament.* This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of rationality.* I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But, before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power: I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver,—or perhaps a victim of that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits! I can truly say, that *pouvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as

*An explanation of this will be found hereafter.

high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment when the public has decided in their favour. It ever was my opinion, that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves.—To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others: I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet: I studied assiduously nature's design in my formation—where the lights and shades in my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause: but, at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty.—My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I had met with from the public; and besides I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde; for

"Hunrgy ruin had me in the wind."

"I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caladonia, *The gloomy night is gathering fast;* when a letter from Dr. Blacklock, to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The Doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star, that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men, the Earl of Glencairn. *Oublie moi, Grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*

"I need relate no further. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to *catch* the characters and *the manners living as they rise.* Whether I have profited time will shew.

. . . . . .

At the period of our poet's death, his brother Gilbert Burns, wa ignorant that he had himself written the foregoing narrative of hi life while in Ayrshire; and having been applied to by Mrs. Dun lop for some memoirs of his brother, he complied with her reques

in a letter, from which the following narrative is chiefly extracted. When Gilbert Burns afterwards saw the letter of our poet to Dr. Moore, he made some annotations upon it, which shall be noticed as we proceed.

Robert Burns was born on the 29th day of January, 1759, in a small house about two miles from the town of Ayr, and within a few hundred yards of Alloway Church, which his poem of *Tam o' Shanter* has rendered immortal. The name which the poet and his brother modernized into Burns, was originally Burnes or Burness. Their father, William Burnes, was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and had received the education common in Scotland to persons in his condition of life: he could read and write, and had some knowledge of arithmetic. His family having fallen into reduced circumstances, he was compelled to leave his home in his nineteenth year, and turned his steps towards the south in quest of a livelihood. The same necessity attended his elder brother Robert. "I have often heard my father," says Gilbert Burns, in his letter to Mrs. Dunlop, "describe the anguish of mind he felt when they parted on the top of the hill on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went. My father undertook to act as gardener, and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of his aged parent; and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire, that they scarcely knew how to employ it when it arrived." From Edinburgh William Burnes past westward into the county of Ayr, where he engaged himself as gardener to the laird of Fairley, with whom he lived two years; then changing his service for that of Crawford of Doonside. At length, being desirous of settling in life, he took a perpetual lease of seven acres of land from Dr. Campbell, physician in Ayr, with the view of commencing nurseryman and public gardener; and having built a house upon it with his own hands, married in December, 1757, Agnes Brown, the mother of our poet, who still survives. The first fruit of this marriage was Robert, the subject of these memoirs, born on the 29th of January, 1759, as has already been mentioned. Before William Burnes had made much progress in preparing his nursery, he was withdrawn from that undertaking by Mr. Fergusson, who purchased the estate of Doonside, in the immediate neighbourhood, and engaged him as his gardener and overseer; and this was his situation when our poet was born. Though in the service of Mr. Ferguson, he lived in his own house, his wife managing her family and little dairy, which consisted sometimes of two, sometimes of three milch cows; and this state of unambitious content continued till the year 1766. His son Robert was sent by him, in his sixth year, to a school at Alloway Miln, about a mile distant, taught by a person of the name of Campbell; but this teacher being in a few months appointed master of the workhouse at Ayr, William Burnes, in conjunction with some other heads of families, engaged John Murdock in his stead. The education of our poet, and of his brother Gilbert, was in common;

and of their proficiency under Mr. Murdoch we have the following account: "With him we learnt to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us too, the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar; but Robert made some proficiency in it—a circumstance of considerable weight in the upholding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader, when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him *The Life of Hannibal*, which was the first book he read (the school-books excepted) and almost the only one he had the opportunity of reading while he was at school; *The Life of Wallace*, which he classes with it in one of his letters to you, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from a blacksmith who shod our horses."

It appears that William Burnes improved himself greatly in the service of Mr. Ferguson, by his intelligence, industry, and integrity. In consequence of this, with a view of promoting his interest, Mr. Fergusson leased him a farm, of which we have the following account:

"The farm was upwards of seventy acres (between eighty and ninety, English statute measure), the rent of which was to be forty pounds annually for the first six years, and afterwards forty-five pounds. My father endeavoured to sell his leasehold property for the purpose of stocking this farm, but at that time was unable, and Mr. Ferguson lent him a hundred pounds for that purpose. He removed to his new situation at Whitsuntide, 1766. It was, I think, not above two years after this, that Murdoch, our tutor and friend, left this part of the country; and there being no school near us, and our little services being useful on the farm, my father undertook to teach us arithmetic in the winter evenings, by candle-light; and in this way my two elder sisters got all the education they received. I remember a circumstance that happened at this time, which, though trifling in itself, is fresh in my memory, and may serve to illustrate the early character of my brother. Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave, when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus;* and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party were dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused remembrance of it) had her hands chopt off, and her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied, that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left *The School for Love*, and a comedy (translated, I think, from the French), in its place."

"Nothing," continues Gilbert Burns, "could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Elephant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood. Indeed the greatest part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, while we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He borrowed *Salmon's Geographical Grammar* for us, and endevoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while from a book society in Ayr, he procured for us the reading of *Derham's Physico and Astro-Theology*, and *Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to *Stackhouse's History of the Bible*, then lately published by James Meuros in Kilmarnock: from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us for some time, and had learnt some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went to a bookseller's shop in Ayr, to purchase *The Ready Reckoner*, or *Tradesman's sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of *The Complete Letter-Writer*, he got by mistake, a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. The book was to Robert of the greatest importance. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

"My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us, week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two or three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time too he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollet, (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle* excepted), with Hume and Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the later times. I recollect indeed my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr. Hamilton of Bourtree-hill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James the First, and his unfortunate son, Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country,

and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do every thing in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also *those excellent new songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

"The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar, with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirk Oswald (where he lived with a brother of my mother's) to learn surveying.

"During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr. Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

"Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr. Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr. Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learned it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his *Rudiments* on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect, but they all ended,

'So I'll to my Latin again.'

"Thus you see Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher

at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr. Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives, a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationary wares.

"The father of Dr. Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was, I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He eagerly recognised my father as a fellow native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr. Paterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very geenteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

"When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, *Pope's Translation of Homer*, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give, than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let, a few years ago, five pounds per annum lower than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father, in consequence of this, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease.—To the buffetings of misfortune, we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in threshing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty,) broken down with the long continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a decling state of circumstances, these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life, was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed, in the night time.

"By a stipulation in my father's lease, he had a right to throw

it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a better farm at the end of the first six years, but failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. He then took the farm of Lochlea, of 130 acres, at the rent of twenty shillings an acre, in the parish of Tarbolton, of Mr. ——— ———, then a merchant in Ayr, and now (1797) a merchant in Liverpool. He removed to this farm at Whitsunday, 1777, and possessed it only seven years. No writing had ever been made out of the conditions of the lease; a misunderstanding took place respecting them; the subjects in dispute were submitted to arbitration, and the decision involved my father's affairs in ruin. He lived to know of this decision, but not to see any execution in consequence of it. He died on the 13th of February, 1784.

"The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age), were not marked by much literary improvement; but during this time the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though, when young, he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away;* but the agitations of his mind and body exceeded any thing of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one, out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure, to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination: and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her. One generally reigned paramount in his affections: but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under plots in the drama of his love. As these connexions were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his 23d year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to thank of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax raising. He accordingly wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health

nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him. Towards the end of the period under review (in his 24th year), and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his epistle to John Rankin. During this period also he became a freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking. A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required than what I am about to give. During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs drew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of £90 per annum (the farm on which I live at present) from Mr. Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was seven pounds per annum each. And during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement in my brother's favour. His temperance and frugality were every thing that could be wished.

"The farm of Mossgiel lies very high, and mostly on a cold wet bottom. The first four years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops in consequence were very unprofitable; and, notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable part of our original stock. It was during these four years that Robert formed his connexion with Jean Armour, afterwards Mrs. Burns. The connexion *could no longer be concealed*, about the time we came to a final determination to quit the farm. Robert durst not engage with a family in his poor unsettled state, but was anxious to shield his partner by every means in his power from the consequences of their imprudence. It was agreed therefore between them, that they should make a legal acknowledgment of an irregular and private marriage; that he should go to Jamaica, to *push his fortune*; and that she should remain with her father till it might please Providence to put the means of supporting a family in his power.

"Mrs. Burns was a great favourite of her father's. The intimation of a private marriage was the first suggestion he received of

her real situation. He was in the greatest distress, and fainted away. The marriage did not appear to him to make the matter any better. A husband in Jamaica appeared to him and his wife little better than none, and an effectual bar to any other prospects of a settlement in life that their daughter might have. They therefore expressed a wish to her, that the written papers which respected the marriage should be cancelled, and thus the marriage rendered void. In her melancholy state she felt the deepest remorse at having brought such heavy affliction on parents that loved her so tenderly, and submitted to their entreaties. Their wish was mentioned to Robert. He felt the deepest anguish of mind. He offered to stay at home and provide for his wife and family in the best manner that his daily labours could provide for them; that being the only means in his power. Even this offer they did not approve of; for humble as Miss Armour's station was, and great though her imprudence had been, she still, in the eyes of her partial parents, might look to a better connexion than that with my friendless and unhappy brother, at that time without house or biding-place. Robert at length consented to their wishes; but his feelings on this occasion were of the most distracting nature: and the impression of sorrow was not effaced, till by a regular marriage they were indissolubly united. In the state of mind which this separation produced, he wished to leave the country as soon as possible, and agreed with Dr. Douglas to go out to Jamaica as an assistant overseer, or, as I believe it is called, a book-keeper, on his estate. As he had not sufficient money to pay his passage, and the vessel in which Dr. Douglas was to procure a passage for him was not expected to sail for some time, Mr. Hamilton advised him to publish his poems in the meantime by subscription, as a likely way of getting a little money to provide him more liberally in necessaries for Jamaica. Agreeably to this advice, subscription bills were printed immediately, and the printing was commenced at Kilmarnock, his preparations going on at the same time for his voyage. The reception, however, which his poems met with in the world, and the friends they procured him, made him change his resolution of going to Jamaica, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return, in happier circumstances, he renewed his connexion with Mrs. Burns, and rendered it permanent by a union for life.

"Thus, Madam, have I endeavoured to give you a simple narrative of the leading circumstances in my brother's early life. The remaining part he spent in Edinburgh or Dumfries-shire, and its incidents are as well known to you as to me. His genius having procured him your patronage and friendship, this gave rise to the correspondence between you, in which, I believe, his sentiments were delivered with the most respectful, but most unreserved confidence, and which only terminated with the last days of his life."

This narrative of Gilbert Burns may serve as a commentary on the preceding sketch of our poet's life by himself. It will be seen that the distraction of mind which he mentions (p. xxviii,) arose from the distress and sorrow in which he had involved his future

wife. The whole circumstances attending this connexion are certainly of a very singular nature.

The reader will perceive, from the foregoing narrative how much the children of William Burnes were indebted to their father, who was certainly a man of uncommon talents; though it does not appear that he possessed any portion of that vivid imagination for which the subject of these memoirs was distinguished. In page xxv. it is observed by our poet, that his father had an unaccountable antipathy to dancing-schools, and that his attending one of these brought on him his displeasure, and even dislike. On this observation Gilbert has made the following remark, which seems entitled to implicit credit:—"I wonder how Robert could attribute to our father that lasting resentment of his going to a dancing-school against his will, of which he was incapable. I believe the truth was, that he, about this time, began to see the dangerous impetuosity of my brother's passions, as well as his not being amenable to counsel, which often irritated my father; and which he would naturally think a dancing-school was not likely to correct. But he was proud of Robert's genius, which he bestowed more expense in cultivating than on the rest of the family, in the instances of sending him to Ayr and Kirk-Oswald schools; and he was greatly delighted with his warmth of heart, and his conversational powers. He had indeed that dislike of dancing-schools which Robert mentions; but so far overcame it during Robert's first month of attendance, that he allowed all the rest of the family that were fit for it, to accompany him during the second month. Robert excelled in dancing, and was for some time distractedly fond of it."

In the original letter to Dr. Moore, our poet described his ancestors as "renting lands of the noble Keiths of Marischal, and as having had the honour of sharing their fate." "I do not," continues he, "use the word *honour* with any reference to political principles; *loyal* and *disloyal* I take to be merely relative terms, in that ancient and formidable court, known in this country by the name of Clublaw, where the right is always with the strongest. But those who dare welcome ruin and shake hands with infamy, for what they sincerely believe to be the cause of their God, or their king, are, as Mark Antony says in Shakspeare, of Brutus and Cassius, *honourable men*. I mention this circumstance, because it threw my father on the world at large.

This paragraph has been omitted in printing the letter, at the desire of Gilbert Burns; and it would have been unnecessary to have noticed it on the present occasion, had not several manuscript copies of that letter been in circulation. "I do not know," observes Gilbert Burns, "how my brother could be misled in the account he has given of the Jacobitism of his ancestors.—I believe the Earl of Marischal forfeited his title and estate in 1715, before my father was born; and among a collection of parish-certificates in his possession, I have read one, stating that the bearer had no concern in the *late wicked rebellion*." On the information of one who knew William Burnes soon after he arrived in the county of Ayr, it may be mentioned, that a report did prevail, that he had taken the field with the young chevalier; a report which the certificate mentioned by his son was, perhaps, intended to counteract.

Strangers from the North, settling in the low country of Scotland, were in those days liable to suspicions of having been, in the familiar phrase of the country, "Out in the forty-five," (1745,) especially when they had any stateliness or reserve about them, as was the case with William Burnes. It may easily be conceived, that our poet would cherish the belief of his father's having been engaged in the daring enterprise of Prince Charles Edward. The generous attachment, the heroic valour, and the final misfortunes of the adherents of the house of Stuart, touched with sympathy his youthful and ardent mind, and influenced his orginal political opinions. The father of our poet is described by one who knew him towards the latter end of his life, as above the common stature, thin, and bent with labour. His countenance was serious and expressive, and the scanty locks on his head were grey. He was of a religious turn of mind, and as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology. There is in Gilbert's hands a little manual of religious belief, in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, composed by him for the use of his children, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish church into something approaching to Arminianism. He was a devout man, and in the practice of calling his family together to join in prayer. It is known that the following exquisite picture, in the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, represents William Burnes and his family at their evening devotions.

The cheerful supper done, with serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big *hall*-Bible, once his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And "*Let us worship God!*" he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs* worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heavenly flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays;
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame,
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
No unison have they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How *Abram* was the *friend* of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal bard* did groaning lie,
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or, Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or, rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guileless blood for guilty man was shed;
How *he* who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How *he* who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand:
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced, by Heaven's command!

Then kneeling down to Heaven's eternal King,
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays;
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days;
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

. . . . . .

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent pair their *secret homage* pay,
And offer up to Heaven the warm request,
That *he* who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with *grace divine* preside!

Of a family so interesting as that which inhabited the cottage of William Burnes and particularly of the father of the family, the reader will perhaps be willing to listen to some farther account. What follows is given by one already mentioned with so much honour, in the narrative of Gilbert Burns, Mr. Murdoch, the preceptor of our poet, who, in a letter to Joseph Cooper Walker, Esq. of Dublin, author of the *Historical Memoir of the Italian Tragedy*, lately published, thus expresses himself:—

"Sir,

"I was lately favoured with a letter from our worthy friend, the Rev. Wm. Adair, in which he requested me to communicate to you whatever particulars I could recollect concerning Robert Burns, the Ayrshire poet. My business being at present multifarious and harrassing, my attention is consequently so much divided, and I am so little in the habit of expressing my thoughts on paper, that at this distance of time I can give but a very imperfect sketch of the early part of the life of that extraordinary genius with which alone I am acquainted.

"William Burnes, the father of the poet, was born in the shire of Kincardine, and bred a gardener. He had been settled in Ayrshire ten or twelve years before I knew him, and had been in the service of Mr. Crawford of Doonside. He was afterwards employed

as a gardener and overseer by Provost Ferguson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway, which is now united with that of Ayr. In this parish, on the road-side, a Scotch mile and a half from the town of Ayr, and half a mile from the bridge of Doon, William Burnes took a piece of land, consisting of about seven acres, part of which he laid out in garden ground, and part of which he kept to graze a cow, &c. still continuing in the employ of Provost Ferguson. Upon this little farm was erected an humble dwelling, of which William Burnes was the architect. It was, with the exception of a little straw, literally a tabernacle of clay. In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe, there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe. The *Cotter's Saturday Night*, will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there.

"In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr W. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school where I was improving in writing under my good friend Mr Robinson, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain inn, and bring my writing book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it—(you will readily allow he was not difficult), and told me that he had received very satisfactory information of Mr Tennant, the master of the English, school, concerning my improvement in English and in his method of teaching. In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr Burnes, and four of his neighbours to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary, at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

"My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor about eighteen. Robert and his younger brother Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c. Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used were the *Spelling Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, *Mason's Collection of Prose and Verse*, and *Fisher's English Grammer*. They committed to memory the hymns, and other poems of that collection, with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was, to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done, and at an earlier time, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order: sometimes to substitute synonomous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

"Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguished one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, *Mirth, with thee I mean to live;* and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys, had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

"In the year 1767, Mr. Burns quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm (Mount Oliphant) of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Ferguson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes had taken place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

"In the year 1772, I was appointed (being one of five candidates who were examined) to teach the English school at Ayr; and in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, &c. that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him, that as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, &c. I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

"Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, &c. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short. he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, in Fenelon's own words.

"But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalizing himself in the fields of Ceres—and so he did; for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

"Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him; but was a frequent visitor at his father's house, when I had my half-holiday,

and very often went accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast.—Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, &c.; and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs. Burnes too was of the party as much as possible;

> 'But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
> Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
> She'd come again, and, with a greedy ear,
> Devour up their discourse'———

and particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to any body else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret, as a real loss, that she had missed what the good-man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith).

> 'And ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.'

"He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner, and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as from her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

"He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom; and therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe of the *taws*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heart-felt pain, caused a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

"He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were fellow-labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice: the one time it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time, it was with a very old man, for using some smutty inuendoes and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that paltry, pitiful, passive spirit, that induces some people to *keep booing and booing* in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arro-

gance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided every thing that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, *Herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards man.*

"O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions; then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

"Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation), than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men, much sooner than their neighbours. I do not recollect any of their cotemporaries, at my little seminary, who afterwards made any great figure as literary characters, except Dr. Tennant, who was chaplain to Colonel Fullarton's regiment, and who is now in the East Indies. He is a man of genius and learning; yet affable, and free from pedantry.

"Mr. Burnes, in a short time, found that he had overrated Mount Oliphant, and that he could not rear his numerous family upon it. After being there some years, he removed to Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, where, I believe, Robert wrote most of his poems.

"But here, sir, you will permit me to pause. I can tell you but little more relative to the poet. I shall, however, in my next, send you a copy of one of his letters to me, about the year 1788. I received one since, but it is mislaid. Please remember me, in the best manner, to my worthy friend, Mr. Adair, when you see him or write to him.

"Hart-street, Bloomsbury-square, London, Feb. 22, 1799."

As the narrative of Gilbert Burns was written at a time when he was ignorant of the existence of the preceding narrative of his brother; so this letter of Mr. Murdoch was written without his having any knowledge that either of his pupils had been employed on the same subject. The three relations served, therefore, not merely to illustrate, but to authenticate each other. Though the information they convey might have been presented within a shorter compass, by reducing the whole into one unbroken narrative, it is scarcely to be doubted, that the intelligent reader will be far more gratified by a sight of these original documents themselves.

Under the humble roof of his parents, it appears indeed that our poet had great advantages; but his opportunities of information at school were more limited as to time than they usually are among his countrymen, in his condition of life: and the acquisitions which he made, and the poetical talent which he exerted, under the pres-

sure of early and incessant toil, and of inferior, and perhaps scanty nutriment, testify at once the extraordinary force and activity of his mind. In his frame of body he rose nearly to five feet ten inches, and assumed the proportions that indicate agility as well as strength. In the various labours of the farm he excelled all his competitors. Gilbert Burns declares, that, in mowing, the exercise that tries all the muscles severely, Robert was the only man that, at the end of a summer's day, he was ever obliged to acknowledge as his master. But though our poet gave the powers of his body to the labours of the farm, he refused to bestow on them his thoughts or his cares. While the ploughshare under his guidance passed through the sward, or the grass fell under the sweep of his scythe, he was humming the songs of his country, musing on the deeds of ancient valour, or rapt in the illusions of Fancy, as her enchantments rose on his view. Happily the Sunday is yet a sabbath, on which man and beast rest from their labours. On this day, therefore, Burns could indulge in a freer intercourse with the charms of nature. It was his delight to wander alone on the banks of the Ayr, whose stream is now immortal, and to listen to the song of the blackbird at the close of the summer's day. But still greater was his pleasure, as he himself informs us, in walking on the sheltered side of a wood, in a cloudy winter day, and hearing the storm rave among the trees; and more elevated still his delight, to ascend some eminence during the agitations of nature, to stride along its summit, while the lightning flashed around him, and amidst the howlings of the tempest, to apostrophize the spirit of the storm. Such situations he declares most favourable to devotion—"Rapt in enthusiasm, I seem to ascend towards Him *who walks on the wings of the wind!*" If other proofs were wanting of the character of his genius, this might determine it. The heart of the poet is peculiarly awake to every impression of beauty and sublimity; but with the higher order of poets, the beautiful is less attractive than the sublime.

The gaiety of many of Burns's writings, and the lively, and even cheerful colouring with which he has pourtrayed his own character, may lead some persons to suppose, that the melancholy which hung over him towards the end of his days, was not an original part of his constitution. It is not to be doubted, indeed, that this melancholy acquired a darker hue in the progress of his life; but, independent of his own and of his brother's testimony, evidence is to be found among his papers, that he was subject very early to those depressions of mind, which are perhaps not wholly separable from the sensibility of genius, but which in him rose to an uncommon degree. The following letter, addressed to his father, will serve as a proof of this observation. It was written at the time when he was learning the business of a flax-dresser, and is dated

"HONOURED SIR, *Irvine, Dec.* 27, 1781.

"I HAVE purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my

sleep is a little sounder, and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast, produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

> 'The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.'

"It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses on the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with wishing you a merry New-year's-day, I shall conclude.

"I am, honoured sir,
"Your dutiful son,
"ROBERT BURNS."

"P.S. My meal is nearly out; but I am going to borrow, till I get more.

This letter written several years before the publication of his poems, when his name was as obscure as his condition was humble, displays the philosophic melancholy which so generally forms the poetical temperament, and that buoyant and ambitious spirit which indicates a mind conscious of its strength. At Irvine, Burns at this time possessed a single room for his lodgings, rented perhaps at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labour as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal sent to him from his father's family. The store of this humble, though wholesome nutriment, it appears was nearly exhausted, and he was about to borrow till he should obtain a supply. Yet even in this situation, his active imagination had formed to itself pictures of eminence and distinction. His despair of making a figure in the

world, shows how ardently he wished for honourable fame; and his contempt of life, founded on this despair, is the genuine expression of a youthful generous mind. In such a state of reflection, and of suffering, the imagination of Burns naturally passed the dark boundaries of our earthly horizon, and rested on those beautiful representations of a better world, where there is neither thirst, nor hunger, nor sorrow, and where happiness shall be in proportion to the capacity of happiness.

Such a disposition is far from being at variance with social enjoyments. Those who have studied the affinities of mind, know that a melancholy of this description, after a while, seeks relief in the endearments of society, and that it has no distant connection with the flow of cheerfulness, or even the extravagance of mirth. It was a few days after the writing of this letter that our poet, "in giving a welcoming carousal to the new year, with his gay companions," suffered his flax to catch fire, and his shop to be consumed to ashes.

The energy of Burns' mind was not exhausted by his daily labours, the effusions of his muse, his social pleasures, or his solitary meditations. Some time previous to his engagement as a flax-dresser, having heard that a debating club had been established in Ayr, he resolved to try how such a meeting would succeed in the village of Tarbolton. About the end of the year 1780, our poet, his brother, and five other young peasants of the neighbourhood, formed themselves into a society of this sort, the declared objects of which were to relax themselves after toil, to promote sociality and friendship, and to improve the mind. The laws and regulations were furnished by Burns. The members were to meet after the labours of the day were over, once a-week, in a small public-house in the village; where each should offer his opinion on a given question or subject, supporting it by such arguments as he thought proper. The debate was to be conducted with order and decorum; and after it was finished, the members were to choose a subject for discussion at the ensuing meeting. The sum expended by each, was not to exceed three pence; and, with the humble potation that this could procure, they were to toast their mistresses, and to cultivate friendship with each other. This society continued its meetings regularly for some time; and in the autumn of 1782, wishing to preserve some accounts of their proceedings, they purchased a book, into which their laws and regulations were copied, with a preamble, containing a short history of their transactions down to that period. This curious document, which is evidently the work of our poet, has been discovered, and it deserves a place in his memoirs.

"*History of the Rise, Proceedings, and Regulations of the Bachelor's Club.*

'Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record.'

"As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought therefore to be the principal view of every man in

every station of life. But as experience has taught us, that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them. But superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity *of earning the sustenance of human life by the labour of their bodies*, whereby, not only the faculties of the mind, but the nerves and sinews of the body, are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man worn down with the necessary labours of life.

"As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, viz. Hugh Reid, Robert Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchel, Thomas Wright, and William M'Gavin, resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club, or society, under such rules and regulations, that while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum: and after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th of November, 1780, come monly called Hallowe'en, and after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question,—'Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?' Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed, and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Ritchie for another member. In May, 1781, we brought in David Sillar, and in June, Adam Jamaison as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Patterson, and John Orr, and in June following we chose James Patterson as a proper brother for such a society. The club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the race night, the July following, and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly we did meet, each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such cheerfulness and good humour, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight." To this preamble are subjoined the rules and regulations.

The philosophical mind will dwell with interest and pleasure on an institution that combined so skilfully the means of instruction

and of happiness; and if grandeur look down with a smile on these simple annals, let us trust that it will be a smile of benevolence and approbation. It is with regret that the sequel of the history of the Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton must be told. It survived several years after our poet removed from Ayrshire, but no longer sustained by his talents, or cemented by his social affections, its meetings lost much of their attraction; and at length, in an evil hour, dissension arising amongst its members, the institution was given up, and the records committed to the flames. Happily the preamble and the regulations were spared; and, as matter of instruction and of example, they are transmitted to posterity.

After the family of our bard removed from Tarbolton to the neighbourhood of Mauchline, he and his brother were requested to assist in forming a similar institution there. The regulations of the club at Mauchline were nearly the same as those of the club at Tarbolton; but one laudable alteration was made. The fines for non-attendance had at Tarbolton been spent in enlarging their scanty potations: at Mauchline it was fixed, that the money so arising, should be set apart for the purchase of books: and the first work procured in this manner was the *Mirror*, the separate numbers of which were at that time recently collected and published in volumes. After it followed a number of other works, chiefly of the same nature, and among these the *Lounger*. The society of Mauchline still subsists, and was in the list of subscribers to the first edition of the works of its celebrated associate.

The members of these two societies were originally all young men from the country, and chiefly sons of farmers; a description of persons in the opinion of our poet, more agreeable in their manners, more virtuous in their conduct, and more susceptible of improvement, than the self-sufficient mechanic of country towns. With deference to the Conversation-society of Mauchline, it may be doubted, whether the books which they purchased were of a kind best adapted to promote the interest and happiness of persons in this situation of life. The *Mirror* and the *Lounger*, though works of great merit, may be said, on a general view of their contents, to be less calculated to increase the knowledge, than to refine the taste of those who read them; and to this last object their morality itself, which is however always perfectly pure, may be considered as subordinate. As works of taste, they deserved great praise. They are indeed, refined to a high degree of delicacy; and to this circumstance it is perhaps owing, that they exhibit little or nothing of the peculiar manners of the age or country in which they were produced. But delicacy of taste, though the source of many pleasures, is not without some disadvantages; and to render it desirable, the possessor should perhaps in all cases be raised above the necessity of bodily labour, unless indeed we should include under this term the exercise of the imitative arts, over which taste immediately presides. Delicacy of taste may be a blessing to him who has the disposal of his own time, and who can choose what book he shall read, of what diversion he shall partake, and what company he shall keep. To men so situated, the cultivation of taste affords a grateful occupation in itself, and opens a path to many other grati-

fications. To men of genius, in the possession of opulence and leisure, the cultivation of the taste may be said to be essential; since it affords employment to those faculties which, without employment would destroy the happiness of the possessor, and corrects that morbid sensibility, or, to use the expression of Mr. Hume, that delicacy of passion, which is the bane of the temperament of genius. Happy had it been for our bard, after he emerged from the condition of a peasant, had the delicacy of his taste equalled the sensibillity of his passions, regulating all the effusions of his muse, and presiding over all his social enjoyments. But to the thousands who share the original condition of Burns, and who are doomed to pass their lives in the station in which they were born, delicacy of taste, were it even of easy attainment, would, if not a positive evil, be at least a doubtful blessing. Delicacy of taste may make many necessary labours irksome or disgusting; and should it render the cultivator of the soil unhappy in his situation, it presents no means by which that situation may be improved. Taste and literature, which diffuse so many charms throughout society, which sometimes secure to their votaries distinction while living, and which still more frequently obtain for them posthumous fame, seldom procure opulence, or even independence, when cultivated with the utmost attention, and can scarcely be pursued with advantage by the peasant in the short intervals of leisure which his occupations allow. Those who raise themselves from the condition of daily labour, are usually men who excel in the practice of some useful art, or who join habits of industry and sobriety to an acquaintance with some of the more common branches of knowledge. The penmanship of Butterworth, and the arithmetic of Cocker, may be studied by men in the humblest walks of life; and they will assist the peasant more in the pursuit of independence, than the study of Homer or of Shakspeare, though he could comprehend, and even imitate, the beauties of those immortal bards.

These observations are not offered without some portion of doubt and hesitation. The subject has many relations, and would justify an ample discussion. It may be observed, on the other hand, that the first step to improvement is to awaken the desire of improvement, and that this will be most effectually done by such reading as interests the heart and excites the imagination. The greater part of the sacred writings themselves, which in Scotland are more especially the manual of the poor, come under this description. It may be farther observed, that every human being is the proper judge of his own happiness, and, within the path of innocence, ought to be permitted to pursue it. Since it is the taste of the Scottish peasantry to give a preference to works of taste and of fancy, it may be presumed they find a superior gratification in the perusal of such works; and it may be added, that it is of more consequence they should be made happy in their original condition, than furnished with the means, or with the desire, of rising above it. Such considerations are doubtless of much weight; nevertheless, the previous reflections may deserve to be examined, and here we shall leave the subject.

Though the records of the society at Tarbolton are lost and those of the society of Mauchline have not been transmitted, yet we may

safely affirm, that our poet was a distinguished member of both these associations, which were well calculated to excite and to develope the powers of his mind. From seven to twelve persons constituted the society at Tarbolton, and such a number is best suited to the purposes of information. Where this is the object of these societies, the number should be such, that each person may have an opportunity of imparting his sentiments, as well as of receiving those of others; and the powers of private conversation are to be employed, not those of public debate. A limited society of this kind, where the subject of conversation is fixed beforehand, so that each member may revolve it previously in his mind, is perhaps one the happiest contrivances hitherto discovered for shortening the acquisition of knowledge, and hastening the evolution of talents. Such an association requires indeed somewhat more of regulation than the rules of politeness established in common conversation; or rather, perhaps, it requires that the rules of politeness, which in animated conversation are liable to perpetual violation, should be vigorously enforced. The order of speech established in the club at Tarbolton, appears to have been more regular than was required in so small a society; where all that is necessary seems to be, the fixing on a member to whom every speaker shall address himself, and who shall in return secure the speaker from interruption. Conversation, which among men whom intimacy and friendship have relieved from reserve and restraint, is liable, when left to itself, to so many inequalities, and which, as it becomes rapid, so often diverges into separate and collateral branches, in which it is dissipated and lost, being kept within its channel by a simple limitation of this kind, which practice renders easy and familiar, flows along in one full stream, and becomes smoother and clearer, and deeper, as it flows. It may also be observed, that in this way the acquisition of knowledge becomes more pleasant and more easy, from the gradual improvement of the faculty employed to convey it. Though some attention has been paid to the eloquence of the senate and the bar, which in this, as in all other free governments, is productive of so much influence to a few who excel in it, yet little regard has been paid to the humbler exercise of speech in private conversation, an art that is of consequence to every description of persons under every form of government, and on which eloquence of every kind ought perhaps to be founded.

The first requisite of every kind of elocution, a distinct utterance, is the offspring of much time, and long practice. Children are always defective in clear articulation, and so are young people, though of a less degree. What is called slurring in speech, prevails with some persons through life, especially in those who are taciturn. Articulation does not seem to reach its utmost degree of distinctness in men before the age of twenty, or upwards: in women it reaches this point somewhat earlier. Female occupations require much use of speech, because they are duties in detail. Besides, their occupations being generally sedentary, the respiration is left at libery. Their nerves being more delicate, their sensibility as well as fancy is more lively; the natural consequence of which is, a more frequent utterance of thought, a greater fluency of speech, and a distinct articulation at an earlier age. But in men

who have not mingled early and familiarly with the world, though rich perhaps in knowledge, and clear in apprehension, it is often painful to observe the difficulty with which their ideas are communicated by speech, through the want of those habits, that connect thoughts, words, and sounds together; which, when established, seem as if they had arisen spontaneously, but which, in truth, are the result of long and painful practice, and when analyzed, exhibit the phenomena of most curious and complicated association.

Societies then, such as we have been describing, while they may be said to put each member in possession of the knowledge of all the rest, improve the powers of utterance, and by the collision of opinion, exite the faculties of reason and reflection. To those who wish to improve their minds in such intervals of labour as the conditions of a peasant allows, this method of abbreviating instruction, may, under proper regulations, be highly useful. To the student, whose opinions, springing out of solitary observation and meditation, are seldom in the first instance correct, and which have notwithstanding, while confined to himself, an increasing tendency to assume in his own eye the character of demonstrations, an association of this kind, where they may be examined as they arise, is of the utmost importance; since it may prevent those illusions of imagination, by which genius being bewildered, science is often debased, and error propagated through successive generations. And to men who, having cultivated letters or general science in the course of their education, are engaged in the active occupations of life, and no longer able to devote to study or to books the time requisite for improving or preserving their acquisitions, associations of this kind, where the mind may unbend from its usual cares in discussions of literature or science, afford the most pleasing, the most useful, and most rational of gratifications.

Whether, in the humble societies of which he was a member, Burns acquired much direct information, may perhaps be questioned. It cannot however be doubted, that by collision, the faculties of his mind would be excited, that by practice, his habits of enunciation would be established, and thus we have some explanation of that early command of words and of expression which enabled him to pour fourth his thoughts in language not unworthy of his genius, and which, of all his endowments, seemed, on his appearance in Edinburgh, the most extraordinary. For associations of a literary nature, our poet acquired a considerable relish; and happy had it been for him, after he emerged from the condition of a peasant, if fortune had permitted him to enjoy them in the degree of which he was capable, so as to have fortified his principles of virtue by the purification of his taste, and given to the energies of his mind habits of exertion that might have excluded other associations, in which it must be acknowledged they were too often wasted, as well as debased.

The whole course of the Ayr is fine; but the banks of that river, as it bends to the eastward above Mauchline, are singularly beautiful, and they were frequented, as may be imagined, by our poet in his solitary walks. Here the muse often visited him. In one of these wanderings, he met among the woods a celebrated Beauty of the west of Scotland a lady of whom it is said, that the charms of

her person corresponded with the character of her mind. This incident gave rise, as might be expected, to a poem, of which an account will be found in the letter, in which he enclosed it to the object of his inspiration:

To Miss ——.

"MADAME, Mossgiel, 18th Nov. 1786.

"POETS are such *outre* beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the laws of propriety, than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present you with. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge; but it is the best my abilities can produce; and what to a good heart will perhaps be superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

"The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *reveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed in the favourite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you, your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn-twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene, and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with aerial beings! Had Calumny and Villany taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

"What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose into metaphor and measure.

"The enclosed song was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers what might be expected from such a scene.

. . . . . .

"I have the honour to be,
"Madam,
"Your most obedient, and very
"humble servant,
"ROBERT BURNS."

'Twas even—the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang;
The Zephyr wanton'd round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang;
In every glen the mavis sang,
All nature listening seemed the while,
Except where green-wood echoes rang,
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

With careless step I onward strayed,
My head rejoiced in nature's joy,
When musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanc'd to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whisper'd passing by,
Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle!

Fair is the morn in flowery May,
And sweet is night in autumn mild;
When roving through the garden gay,
Or wandering in the lonely wild:
But woman, nature's darling child!
There all her charms she does compile:
Even there her other works are foil'd
By the bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

O had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Though sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plains.
Through weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

Then pride might climb the slippery steep,
Where fame and honours lofty shine;
And thirst of gold might tempt the deep,
Or downward seek the Indian mine:
Give me the cot below the pine,
To tend the flocks or till the soil,
And every day have joys divine,
With the bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

In the manuscript book in which our poet has recounted this incident, and into which the letter and poem are copied, he complains that the lady made no reply to his effusions, and this appears to have wounded his self-love. It is not, however, difficult to find an excuse for her silence. Burns was at that time little known, and where known at all, noted rather for the wild strength of his humour, than for those strains of tenderness, in which he afterwards so much excelled. To the lady herself his name had perhaps never been mentioned, and of such a poem she might not consider herself as the proper judge. Her modesty might prevent her from per-

ceiving that the muse of Tibullus breathed in the nameless poet and that her beauty was awakening strains destined to immortality on the banks of the Ayr. It may be conceived, also, that supposing the verses duly appreciated, delicacy might find it difficult to express its acknowledgments. The fervent imagination of the rustic bard possessed more of tenderness than of respect. Instead of raising himself to the condition of the object of his admiration, he presumed to reduce her to his own, and to strain this high born beauty to his daring bosom. It is true, Burns might have found precedents for such freedoms among the poets of Greece and Rome, and indeed of every country. And it is not to be denied, that lovely women have generally submitted to this sort of profanation with patience, and even good humour. To what purpose is it to repine at misfortune which is the necessary consequence of their own charms, or to remonstrate with a description of men who are incapable of control?

> 'The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
> Are of imagination all compact.'

It may easily be presumed, that the beautiful nymph of Ballochmyle, whoever she may have been, did not reject with scorn the adorations of our poet, though she received them with silent modesty and dignified reserve.

The sensibility of our bard's temper, andthe force of his imagination, exposed him in a particular manner to the impressions of beauty; and these qualities united to his impassioned eloquence gave him in turn a powerful influence over the female heart. The banks of the Ayr formed the scene of youthful passions of a still tenderer nature, the history of which it would be improper to reveal, were it even in our power, and the traces of which will soon be discoverable only in those strains of nature and sensibility to which they gave birth. The song entitled *Highland Mary*, is known to relate to one of these attachments. "It was written," says our bard, "on one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days." The object of this passion died in early life, and the impression left on the mind of Burns seems to have been deep and lasting. Several years afterwards, when he was removed to Nithsdale, he gave vent to the sensibility of his recollections in the following impassioned lines: in the manuscript book from which we extract them, they are addressed *To Mary in Heaven*!

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O! Mary dear departed shade!
Where is thy blissful place of rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?
That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace;
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr gurgling kissed his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods thick'ning green :
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene.
The flowers sprang wanton to be press'd,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.
Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care ;
Time but the impression deeper makes
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Ma'y dear departed shade !
Where is thy blissful place of rest ?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

To the delineations of the poet by himself, by his brother, and by his tutor, these additions are necessary, in order that the reader may see his character in its various aspects, and may have an opportunity of forming a just notion of the variety, as well as the power of his original genius.

We have dwelt the longer on the early part of his life, because it is the least known, and because, as has already been mentioned, this part of his history is connected with some views of the condition and manners of the humblest ranks of society, hitherto little observed, and which will perhaps be found neither useless nor uninteresting.

About the time of leaving his native country, his correspondence commences ; and in the series of letters now given to the world, the chief incidents of the remaining part of his life will be found. This authentic, though melancholy record, will supersede in future the n essity of any extended narrative

Burns set out for Edinburgh in the month of November, 1786. and arrived on the second day afterwards, having performed his journey on foot. He was furnished with a letter of introduction to Dr. Blacklock, from the gentleman to whom the Doctor had addressed the letter which is represented by our bard as the immediate cause of his visiting the Scottish metropolis. He was acquainted Dr. Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University, and had been entertained by that gentleman at Catrine, his estate in Ayrshire. He had been introduced by Mr. Alexander Dalzel to the Earl of Glencairn, who had expressed his high approbation of his poetical talents. He had friends therefore who could introduce him into the circles of literature as well as of fashion, and his own manners and appearance exceeding every expectation that could have been formed of them, he soon became an object of general curiosity and admiration. The following circumstance contributed to this in a considerable degree.—At the time when Burns arrived in Edinburgh, the periodical paper, entitled *The Lounger*, was publisding, every *Saturday* producing a successive number. His poems had attracted the notice of the gentlemen engaged in that undertaking, and the ninety-seventh number of those unequal, though frequently beautiful essays, is devoted to *An Account of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire ploughman, with extracts from his Poems* written by the elegant pen of Mr. Mackenzie. *The Lounger* had

an extensive circulation among persons of taste and literature, not in Scotland only, but in various parts of England, to whose acquaintance therefore our bard was immediately introduced. The paper of Mr. Mackenzie was calculated to introduce him advantageously. The extracts are well selected; the criticisms and reflections are judicious as well as generous; and in the style and sentiments there is that happy delicacy, by which the writings of the author are so eminently distinguished. The extracts from Burns' poems in the ninety-seventh number of *The Lounger* were copied into the London, as well as into many of the principal papers, and the fame of our bard spread throughout the island. Of the manners, character, and conduct of Burns at this period, the following account has been given by Mr. Stewart, in a letter to the editor, which he is particularly happy to have obtained permission to insert in these memoirs.

Professor Dugald Stewart of Edinburgh to Dr. James Currie of Liverpool.

"The first time I saw Robert Burns was on the 23rd of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend Mr. John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded.—My excellent and much lamented friend, the late Basil, Lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and by the kindness and frankness of his manners, left an impression on the mind of the poet, which never was effaced. The verses I allude to are among the most imperfect of his pieces; but a few stanzas may perhaps be an object of curiosity to you, both on account of the character to which they relate, and of the light which they throw on the situation and feelings of the writer, before his name was known to the public.

"I cannot positively say, at this distance of time, whether, at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had been just published, or was yet in the press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession copies, in his own hand-writing, of some of his favourite performances; particularly of his verses "on turning up a Mouse with his plough;" —"on the Mountain Daisy;" and "the Lament." On my return to Edinburgh, I showed the volume, and mentioned what I knew of the author's history, to several of my friends, and, among others, to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, who first recommended him to public notice in the 9th number of *The Lounger*.

At this time Burns' prospects in life were so extremely gloomy, that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation, not, however, without lamenting, that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or gauger in his own country.

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious

genius and worth; but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance; and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments, than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"He came to Edinburgh early in the winter following, and remained there for several months. By whose advice he took this step, I am unable to say. Perhaps it was suggested only by his own curiosity to see a little more of the world; but, I confess, I dreaded the consequences from the first, and always wished that his pursuits and habits should continue the same as in the former part of life; with the addition of, what I considered as then completely within his reach, a good farm on moderate terms, in a part of the country agreeable to his taste.

"The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right he always wore boots; and, when on more than usual ceremony, buck-skin breeches.

"The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid-Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation, than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

"In his political principles he was then a Jacobite; which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschell. Indeed he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the

winter of 1786-7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects, or his private affairs.

"I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me, that you had ever seen Burns. If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

"Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet, was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding; but, to my taste, not often pleasing or happy. His attempts at epigram, in his printed works, are the only performances, perhaps, that he has produced, totally unworthy of his genius.

"In summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed.

"I should have mentioned before, that notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns's predilection for convivial, and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me indeed himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance. I was however somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed, by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.

"In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Masonic Lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and every thing he said was happily conceived, and forcibly as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken, he told me, that in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he

had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention, what I have always considered as characteristical in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good nature of his taste, in judging of the compositions of others, when there was any real grounds for praise. I repeated to him many passages of English poetry with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture with which he heard them. The collection of songs by Dr. Aiken, which I first put into his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing; and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose, I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's works, which I thought very happily executed, upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish, or to perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisite simplicity, and spoke of them with indifference when compared with the point, and antithesis, and quaintness of *Junius*. The influence of this taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellencies render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr. Robertson used to say, that considering his education, the latter seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

"His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently long compositions with the most minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads, and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them (he told me) he had learned in his childhood, from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction of her son's genius.

"Of the more polished verses which accidentally fell into his hands in his early years, he mentioned particularly the recommendatory poems, by different authors, prefixed to *Hervey's Meditations*; a book which has always had a very wide circulation among such of the country people of Scotland, as affect to unite some degree of taste with their religious studies. And these poems (although they are certainly below mediocrity) he continued to read with a degree of rapture beyond expression. He took notice of this fact himself, as a proof how much the taste is liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances.

"His father appeared to me, from the account he gave of him, to have been a respectable and worthy character, possessed of a mind superior to what might have been expected from his station in life. He ascribed much of his own principles and feelings to the early impressions he had received from his instructions and example. I recollect that he once applied to *him* (and he added, that the passage was a literal statement of fact), the two last lines of the follow-

ing passage in the *Minstrel*, the whole of which he repeated with great enthusiasm;

> 'Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
> When fate relenting, lets the flower revive;
> Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
> Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?'
> Is it for this fair Virtue oft must strive
> With disappointment, penury, and pain?
> No! Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive;
> And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
> Bright through th' eternal year of love's triumphant reign.
>
> This truth sublime, his simple sire had taught:
> In sooth 'twas almost all the shepherd knew.

"With respect to Burns's early education, I cannot say any thing with certainty. He always spoke with respect and gratitude of the school-master who had taught him to read English; and who, finding in his scholar a more than ordinary ardour for knowledge, had been at pains to instruct him in the grammatical principles of the language. He began the study of Latin, but dropped it before he had finished the verbs. I have sometimes heard him quote a few Latin words, such as *omnia vincit amor &c.* but they seemed to be such as he had caught from conversation, and which he repeated by *rote.* I think he had a project after he came to Edinburgh, of prosecuting the study under his intimate friend, the late Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the grammar-school here; but I do not know if he ever proceeded so far as to make the attempt.

"He certainly possessed a smattering of French; and, if he had an affectation in any thing, it was in introducing occasionally a word or a phrase from that language. It is possible that his knowledge in this respect might be more extensive than I suppose it to be; but that you can learn from his more intimate acquaintance. It would be worth while to inquire, whether he was able to read the French authors with such facility as to receive from them any improvement to his taste. For my own part, I doubt it much—nor would I believe it, but on very strong and pointed evidence.

"If my memory does not fail me, he was well instructed in arithmetic, and knew something of practical geometry, particularly of surveying.—All his other attainments were entirely his own.

"The last time I saw him was during the winter, 1788 89; when he passed an evening with me at Drumsheugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend Mr. Alison was the only other in company. I never saw him more agreeable or interesting. A present which Mr. Alison sent him afterwards of his *Essays on Taste,* drew from Burns a letter of acknowledgment, which I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed, of the several principles of the doctrine of *association.* When I saw Mr. Alison in Shropshire last autumn, I forget to inquire if the letter be still in existence. If it is, you may easily procure it, by means of our friend Mr. Houlbrooke."

* * * * * * *

The scene that opened on our bard in Edinburgh was altogether new, and in a variety of other respects highly interesting, especially

to one of his disposition of mind. To use an expression of his own he found himself "suddenly translated from the veriest shades of life," into the presence, and, indeed, into the society of a number of persons, previously known to him by report as of the highest distinction in his country, and whose characters it was natural for him to examine with no common curiosity.

From the men of letters, in general, his reception was particularly flattering. The late Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Mackenzie, and Mr. Fraser Tytler, may be mentioned in the list of those who perceived his uncommon talents, who acknowledged more especially his power in conversation, and who interested themselves in the cultivation of his genius. In Edinburgh, literary and fashionable society are a good deal mixed. Our bard was an acceptable guest in the gayest and most elevated circles, and frequently received from female beauty and elegance, those attentions above all others most grateful to him. At the table of Lord Monboddo he was a frequent guest; and while he enjoyed the society, and partook of the hospitalities of the venerable Judge, he experienced the kindness and condescension of his lovely and accomplished daughter. The singular beauty of this young lady was illumined by that happy expression of countenance which results from the union of cultivated taste and superior understanding, with the finest affections of the mind. The influence of such attractions was not unfelt by our poet. "There has not been any thing like Miss Burnet," said he in a letter to a friend, "in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence." In his *Address to Edinburgh*, she is celebrated in a strain of still greater elevation:

> 'Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
> Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
> I see the Sire of Love on high,
> And own his works indeed divine!'

This lovely woman died a few years afterwards in the flower of her youth. Our bard expressed his sensibility on that occasion, in verses addressed to her memory.

Among the men of rank and fashion, Burns was particularly distinguished by James, Earl of Glencairn. On the motion of this nobleman, the *Caledonian Hunt*, (an association of the principal of the nobility and gentry of Scotland,) extended their patronage to our bard, and admitted him to their gay orgies. He repaid their notice by a dedication of the enlarged and improved edition of his poems, in which he has celebrated their patriotism and independence in very animated terms.

"I congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes runs uncontaminated; and that, from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. * * * May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find in you an inexorable foe!"

It is to be presumed that these generous sentiments, uttered at an era singularly propitious to independence of character and conduct, were favourably received by the persons to whom they were addressed, and that they were echoed from every bosom, as well as

from that of the Earl of Glencairn. This accomplished nobleman, a scholar, a man of taste and sensibility, died soon afterwards. Had he lived, and had his power equalled his wishes, Scotland might still have exulted in the genius, instead of lamenting the early fate of her favourite bard.

A taste for letters is not always conjoined with habits of temperance and regularity; and Edinburgh, at the period of which we speak, contained perhaps an uncommon proportion of men of considerable talents, devoted to social excesses, in which their talents were wasted and debased.

Burns entered into several parties of this description, with the usual vehemence of his character. His generous affections, his ardent eloquence, his brilliant and daring imagination, fitted him to be the idol of such associations; and accustoming himself to conversation of unlimited range, and to festive indulgences that scorned restraint, he gradually lost some portion of his relish for the more pure, but less poignant pleasures, to be found in the circles of taste, elegance, and literature. The sudden alteration in his habits of life operated on him physically as well as morally.—The humble fare of an Ayrshire peasant he had exchanged for the luxuries of the Scottish metropolis, and the effects of this change on his ardent constitution could not be inconsiderable. But whatever influence might be produced on his conduct, his excellent understanding suffered no correspondent debasement. He estimated his friends and associates of every description at their proper value, and appreciated his own conduct with a precision that might give scope to much curious and melancholy reflection. He saw his danger, and at times formed resolutions to guard against it; but he had embarked on the tide of dissipation, and was borne along its stream.

Of the state of his mind at this time, an authentic, though imperfect document remains in a book which he procured in the spring of 1787, for the purpose, as he himself informs us, of recording in it whatever seemed worthy of observation. The following extracts may serve as a specimen:

Edinburgh, April 9, 1787.

"As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, 'that half a word fixed upon, or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me, and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and, at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, and vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Now I am sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage phi-

losophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

"For these reasons I am determined to make these pages my confident. I will sketch every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, *without feud or favour.*—Where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will, in some measure, feast my vanity; and begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security, at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

"My own private story likewise, my love adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted.—In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up for sale.

"To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exemption—the connexion between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

> When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

"There, confidence—confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion, that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly 'reigns and revels.' But this is not my lot; and, in my situation, if I am wise (which by the bye I have no real chance of being), my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow 'to watch alone on the house tops,—Oh, the pity!

* * * * * *

"There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparision how a man of genius, nay of avowed worth, is received every where, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are all born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due;* he meets, at a great man's table, a Squire something, or a Sir somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord, at heart, gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eighteenpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty!

"The noble G—— has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed me so much attention—engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my

gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him, though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

"With——I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more when he descends from his pinacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, what do I care for him, or his pomp either?"

* * * * *

The intentions of the poet in procuring this book, so fully described by himself, were very imperfectly executed. He has inserted into it a few or no incidents, but several observations and reflections, of which the greater part that are proper for the public eye, will be found interwoven in the volume of his letters. The most curious particulars in the book are the delineation of the characters he met with. These are not numerous; but they are chiefly of persons of distinction in the republic of letters, and nothing but the delicacy and respect due to living characters prevents us from committing them to the press. Though it appears that in his conversation he was sometimes disposed to sarcastic remarks on the men with whom he lived, nothing of this kind is discoverable in these more deliberate efforts of his understanding, which, while they exhibit great clearness of discrimination, manifest also the wish, as well as the power, to bestow high and generous praise.

By the new edition of his poems, Burns acquired a sum of money that enabled him not only to partake of the pleasure, of Edinburgh, but to gratify a desire he had long entertained, of visiting those parts of his native country, most attractive by their beauty or their grandeur; a desire which the return of summer naturally revived. The scenery on the banks of the Tweed, and of its tributary streams strongly interested his fancy; and, accordingly, he left Edinburgh on the 6th of May, 1787, on a tour through a country so much celebrated in the rural songs of Scotland. He travelled on horseback, and was accompanied, during some part of his journey, by Mr. Ainslie, now writer to the signet, a gentleman who enjoyed much of his friendship and of his confidence. Of this tour a journal remains, which, however, contains only occasional remarks on the scenery, and which is chiefly occupied with an account of the author's different stages, and with his observations on the various characters to whom he was introduced. In the course of this tour he visited Mr. Ainslie of Berrywell, the father of his companion; Mr. Drydone, the celebrated traveller, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Mr. Mackenzie; the Rev. Dr. Somerville of Jedburgh, the historian; Mr. and Mrs. Scott of Wauchope; Dr. Elliot, physician, retired to a romantic spot on the banks of the Roole; Sir Alexander Don; Sir James Hall of Douglass; and a great variety of other respectable characters. Every where the fame of the poet had spread before him, and every where he received the most hospitable and

flattering attentions. At Jedburgh he continued several days, and was honoured by the magistrates with the freedom of their borough. The following may serve as a specimen of this tour, which the perpetual reference to living characters prevents our giving at large.

"*Saturday, May* 6. Left Edinburgh—Lammer-muir hills, miserably dreary in general, but at times very picturesque.

"Lanson-edge, a glorious view of the Merse. Reach Berrywell. . . . The family-meeting with my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister.

"*Sunday.* Went to church at Dunse. Heard Dr. Bowmaker.

"*Monday.* Coldstream—glorious river. Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge—dine at Coldstream with Mr. Ainslie and Mr. Foreman. Beat Mr. Ainslie in a dispute about Voltaire. Drink tea at Lennel-House with Mr. and Mrs. Brydone. . . . Reception extremely flattering. Sleep at Coldstream.

"*Tuesday.* Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of the town fine bridge over the Tweed. Enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, especially on the Scotch side. . . . . Visit Roxburgh Palace—fine situation of it. Ruins of Roxburgh Castle. A holly-bush growing where James the Second was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by a Hottentot, a *maitre d' hotel* of the Duke's!—Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads—turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements. . . . Low markets, consequently low lands—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses. Come up the Teviot, and up the Jed to Jedburgh, to lie, and so wish myself good night.

"*Wednesday.* Breakfast with Mr. Fair. . . . . Charming romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens and orchards, intermingled among the houses and the ruins of a once magnificent cathedral. All the towns here have the appearance of old rude grandeur, but extremely idle. Jed, a fine romantic little river.—Dined with Captain Rutherford, ... return to Jedburgh. Walked up the Jed with some ladies to be shown Love-lane, and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, and to Mr. Somerville, the clergyman of the parish, a man, and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.

* * * * * * * *

"*Jedburgh, Saturday.* Was presented by the magistrates with the freedom of the town.

"Took Farewell of Jedburgh, with some melancholy sensations.

"*Monday, May* 14. *Kelso.* Dine with the farmer's club—all gentleman talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value and attends the fox-hunting club in the country. Go out with Mr Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr Ainslie's, to sleep. In his mind and manners, Mr Ainslie's, is astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir—Every thing in his house elegant. He offers to accompany me in my English tour.

"*Tuesday.* Dine with Sir Alexander Don; a very wet day . . Sleep at Mr Ker's again, and set out next day for Melrose—visit Dryburgh a fine old ruined abbey, by the way. Cross the

Leader, and come up the Tweed to Melrose. Dine there, and visit that far-famed glorious ruin—Come to Selkirk up the Banks of Ettrick. The whole country hereabouts, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony."

* * * * * *

Having spent three weeks in exploring this interesting scenery Burns crossed over into Northumberland. Mr Ker, and Mr Hood, two gentlemen with whom he had become acquainted in the course of his tour, accompanied him. He visited Alnwick Castle; the princely seat of the Duke of Northumberland; the hermitage and old castle of Warkworth; Morpeth and Newcastle.—In this town he spent two days, and then proceeded to the south-west by Hexham and Wardrue, to Carlisle.—After spending a few days at Carlisle with his friend Mr Mitchell, he returned into Scotland, and at Annan his journal terminates abruptly.

Of the various persons with whom he became acquainted in the course of this journey, he has, in general, given some account; and almost always a favourable one. That on the banks of the Tweed and of the Teviot, our bard should find nymphs that were beautiful, is what might be confidently presumed. Two of these are particularly described in his journal. But it does not appear that the scenery, or its inhabitants, produced any effort of his muse, as was to have been wished and expected. From Annan, Burns proceeded to Dumfries, and thence through Sanquhar, to Mossgiel, near Mauchline, in Ayrshire, where he arrived about the 8th of June, 1787, after an absence of six busy and eventful months. It will be easily conceived with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless; he returned to them high in public estimation, and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them to the uttermost farthing, the pittance that fortune had bestowed.

Having remained with them a few days, he proceeded again to Edinburgh, and immediately set out on a journey to the Highlands. Of this tour no particulars have been found among his manuscripts. A letter to his friend Mr. Ainslie, dated *Arrachas, near Crochairbas, by Lochleary,* June 28, 1787, commences as follows:

"I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins."

From this journey Burns returned to his friends in Ayrshire, with whom he spent the month of July, renewed his friendships, and extended his acquaintance throughout the county, where he was now very generally known and admired. In August he again visited Edinburgh, whence he undertook another journey towards the middle of this month in company with Mr. M. Adair, now Dr. Adair, of Harrowgate, of which this gentleman has favoured us with the following account:

"Burns and I left Edinburgh together in August, 1787. We rode

by Linlithgow and Carron to Stirling. We visited the iron-works at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place, and its inhabitants, to the cave of Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical visitor, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling the prospects from the castle strongly interested him; in a former visit to which, his national feelings had been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish Parliaments had frequently been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn on which they were written.

"At Stirling we met with a company of travellers from Edinburgh, among whom was a character in many respects congenial with that of Burns. This was Nicol, one of the teachers of the High Grammar-School at Edinburgh—the same wit and power of conversation; the same fondness for convival society, and thoughtlessness of to-morrow, characterized both. Jacobitical principles in politics were common to both of them; and these have been suspected, since the revolution of France, to have given place to each, to opinions apparently opposite. I regret that I have preserved no *memorabilia* of their conversation, either on this or on other occasions, when I happened to meet them together. Many songs were sung; which I mention for the sake of observing, that when Burns was called on in his turn, he was accustomed, instead of singing, to recite one or other of his own shortest poems, with a tone and emphasis, which, though not correct or harmonious, were impressive and pathetic. This he did on the present occasion.

"From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs. Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for nine years. Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connexion from which I have derived, and expect further to derive, much happiness.

"During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland, in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the *Cauldron Linn;* and the *Rumbling Bridge*, a single broad arch, thrown by the Devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns's muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember, that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, expressed their disappointment at his not expressing in more glowing and fervid language, his impressions of the *Cauldron Linn* scene, certainly highly sublime, and somewhat horrible.

"A visit to Mrs. Bruce of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race who gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully. This venerable

dame with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knight-hood, remarking, that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*. . . . . You will of course conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobitical as the poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment.—She gave as her first toast after dinner, *awa, Uncos*, or, Away with the Strangers.—Who these strangers were, you will readily understand. Mrs A. corrects me by saying it should be *Hooi*, or *Hooki uncos*, a sound used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep.

"We returned to Edinburgh by Kinross (on the shore of Lochleven) and Queensferry. I am inclined to think Burns knew nothing of poor Michael Bruce, who was then alive at Kinross, or had died there a short while before. A meeting between the bards, or a visit to the deserted cottage and early grave of poor Bruce, would have been highly interesting.

"At Dunfermline we visited the ruined abbey, and the abbey-church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *cutty stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication; while Burns from the pulpit addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, he assured me, once been one of seven who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

"In the church yard two broad flag-stones marked the grave of Robert Bruce, for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily *(suus ut mos erat)* execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes.

The surprise expressed by Dr. Adair, in his excellent letter, that the romantic scenery of the Devon should have failed to call forth any exertion of the poet's muse, is not in its nature singular; and the disappointment felt at his not expressing in more glowing language his emotions on the sight of the famous cataract of that river, is similar to what was felt by the friends of Burns, on other occasions of the same nature. Yet the inference that Dr. Adair seems inclined to draw from it, that he had little taste for the picturesque, might be questioned, even if it stood uncontroverted by other evidence. The muse of Burns was in a high degree capricious; she came uncalled, and often refused to attend at his bidding. Of all the numerous subjects suggested to him by his friends and correspondents, there is scarcely one that he adopted. The very expectation that a particular occasion would excite the energies of fancy, if communicated to Burns, seemed in him, as in other poets, destructive of the effect expected. Hence perhaps it may be explained, why the banks of the Devon and the Tweed form no part of the subject of his song.

A similar train of reasoning may perhaps explain the want of

emotion with which he viewed the *Cauldron Linn*. Certainly there are no affections of the mind more deadened by the influence of previous expectation, than those arising from the sight of natural objects, and more especially of objects of grandeur. Minute description of scenes, of a sublime nature, should never be given to those who are about to view them, particularly if they are persons of great strength and sensibility of imagination. Language seldom or never conveys an adequate idea of such objects, but in the mind of a great poet it may excite a picture that far transcends them. The imagination of Burns might form a cataract in comparison with which the *Cauldron Linn* should seem the purling of a rill, and even the mighty falls of Niagara a humble cascade.

Whether these suggestions may assist in explaining our Bard's deficiency of impression on the occasion referred to, or whether it ought rather to be imputed to some pre-occupation, or indisposition of mind, we presume not to decide; but that he was in general feelingly alive to the beautiful or sublime in scenery, may be supported by irresistible evidence. It is true, this pleasure was greatly heightened in his mind, as might be expected, when combined with moral emotions of a kind with which it happily unites. That under this association Burns contemplated the scenery of the Devon with the eye of a genuine poet, the following lines, written at this very period, may bear witness.

On a Young Lady, residing on the banks of the small river Devon, in Clackmannanshire, but whose infant years were spent in Ayrshire.

How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon
With green spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair;
But the bonniest flower on the banks of the Devon
Was once a sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr.

Mild be the sun on this sweet blushing flower,
In the gay rosy morn as it bathes in the dew!
And gentle the fall of the soft vernal shower,
That steals on the evening each leaf to renew.

O spare the dear blossom, ye orient breezes,
With chill hoary wing as ye usher the dawn!
And far be thou distant, thou reptile that seizes
The verdure and pride of the garden and lawn!

Let Bourbon exult in his gay gilded lillies,
And Eng'and triumphant display her proud rose;
A fairer than either adorns the green valleys
Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows.

The different journeys already mentioned did not satisfy the curiosity of Burns. About the beginning of September he again set out from Edinburgh, on a more extended tour to the Highlands, in company with Mr. Nicol, with whom he had contracted a particular intimacy, which lasted during the remainder of his life. Mr. Nicol was of Dumfries-shire, of a descent equally humble with our poet. Like him he rose by the strength of his talents, and fell by the strength of his passions. He died in the summer of 1797. Having received the elements of a classical instruction at his parish school, Mr. Nicol made a very rapid and singular proficiency; and by early undertaking the office of an instructor himself, he acquired the means of entering himself at the University of Edinburgh. There he was first a student of theology, then

a student of medicine, and was afterwards employed in the assistance and instruction of the graduates in medicine, in those parts of their exercises in which the Latin language is employed. In this situation he was the contemporary and rival of the celebrated Dr. Brown, whom he resembled in the particulars of his history, as well as in the leading features of his character. The office of assistant teacher in the High-School being vacant, it was, as usual, filled up by competition; and, in the face of some prejudices, and perhaps of some well founded objections, Mr. Nicol, by superior learning, carried it from all the other candidates. This office he filled at the period of which we speak.

It is to be lamented, that an acquaintance with the writers of Greece and Rome does not always supply an orignal want of taste and correctness in manners and conduct; and where it fails of this effect, it sometimes inflames the native pride of temper, which treats with disdain those delicacies in which it has not learned to excel. It was thus with the fellow-traveller of Burns. Formed by nature in a model of great strength, neither his person nor his manners had any tincture of taste or elegance; and his coarseness was not compensated by that romantic sensibility, and those towering flights of imagination, which distinguished the conversation of Burns, in the blaze of whose genius all the deficiencies of his manners were absorbed and disappeared.

Mr. Nicol and our poet travelled in a post-chaise, which they engaged for the journey, and passing through the heart of the Highlands, stretched northwards, about ten miles beyond Inverness. There they bent their course eastward, across the island, and returned by the shore of the German Sea to Edinburgh. In the course of this tour, some particulars of which will be found in a letter of our bard, No. 34, they visited a number of remarkable scenes, and the imagination of Burns was constantly excited by the wild and sublime scenery through which he passed. Of this, several proofs may be found in the poems formerly printed. Of the history of one of these poems, *The humble Petition of Bruar Water*, and of the bard's visit to Athole House, some particulars will be found in Letters No. 33. and No. 34: and by the favour of Mr. Walker of Perth, then residing in the family of the Duke of Athole, we are enabled to give the following additional account.

"On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had been previously acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The Duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but the Duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole House. He accepted the invitation; but, as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would in the interval be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened, though faint and uncertain, view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arises from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble water-fall, he threw himself

on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem, on *Bruar Water*, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to the eye.

> Or by the reaper's nightly beam,
> Mild, chequering through the trees,
> Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
> Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.

"It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

"My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but, when led into it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone that gave him a title to be there. The Duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as *honest men and bonnie lassies* an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem.

"Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking at the time a few paces before us. He was a man of a robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; "in short," he added, "his mind is like his body, he has a confounded strong in-knee'd sort of a soul."

"Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the Duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the Duke's advice, visited the *Falls of Bruar*, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness, with the verses enclosed."

It appears that the impression made by our poet on the noble family of Athole was in a high degree favourable: it is certain he was charmed with the reception he received from them, and he often mentioned the two days he spent at Athole-house as among the happiest of his life. He was warmly invited to prolong his stay, but sacrificed his inclinations to his engagement with Mr. Nicol; which is the more to be regretted, as he would otherwise have been introduced to Mr. Dundas (then daily expected on a visit to the Duke), a circumstance that might have had a favourable influence

on Burns's future fortunes. At Athole house, he met for the first time, Mr. Graham of Fintry, to whom he was afterwards indebted for his office in the Excise.

The letters and poems which he addressed to Mr. Graham, bear testimony of his sensibility, and justify the supposition, that he would not have been deficient in gratitude had he been elevated to a situation better suited to his disposition and to his talents.

A few days after leaving Blair Athole, our poet and his fellow-traveller arrived at Fochabers. In the course of the preceding winter Burns had been introduced to the Duchess of Gordon at Edinburgh, and presuming on his acquaintance, he proceded to Gordon Castle, leaving Mr. Nichol at the inn in the village. At the castle our poet was received with the utmost hospitality and kindness, and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at the table, as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and after drinking a few glasses of wine, he rose up and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay, he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr. Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself. He was however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the Duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness. The invitation came too late; the pride of Nicol was inflamed to a high degree of passion, by the neglect which he had already suffered. He had ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, being determined to proceed on his journey alone: and they found him parading the streets of Fochabers, before the door of the inn, venting his anger on the postilliou, for the slownes with which he obeyed his commands. As no explanation nor entreaty could change the purpose of his fellow-traveller, our poet was reduced to the necessity of separating from him entirely, or of instantly proceeding with him on their journey. He chose the last of these alternatives: and seating himself beside Nicol in the post-chaise, with mortification and regret, he turned his back on Gordon Castle, where he had promised himself some happy days. Sensible, however, of the great kindness of the noble family, he made the best return in his power, by the following poem.

Streams that glide in orient plains
Never bound by winter chains;
Glowing here on golden sands,
There commix'd with foulest stains
From tyranny's empurpled bands;
These, their richly gleaming waves,
I leave to tyrants and their slaves;
Give me the stream that sweetly laves
The banks by Castle-Gordon.

Spicy forests ever gay,
Shading forth the burning ray
Hapless wretches sold to toil
Or the ruthless native's way
Bent on slaughter, blood and spoil
Woods that ever verdant wave,
I leave the tyrant and the slave,
Give me the groves that lofty brave
The storms, by Castle-Gordon.

Widly here without control,
Nature reigns and rules the whole;
In that sober pensive mood,
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood,
Life's poor day I'll musing rave,
And find at night a sheltering cave,
Where waters flow and wild woods wave,
By bonnie Castle-Gordon.

Burns remained in Edinburgh during the greater part of the winter, 1787-8, and again entered into the society and dissipation of that metropolis. It appears that on the 31st day of December, he attended a meeting to celebrate the birth-day of the lineal descendant of the Scottish race of kings, the late unfortunate Prince Charles Edward. Whatever might have been the wish or purpose of the original institutors of this annual meeting, there is no reason to suppose that the gentlemen of which it was at this time composed, were not perfectly loyal to the king and the throne. It is not to be conceived that they entertained any hope of, any wish for, the restoration of the House of Stuart; but, over their sparkling wine, they indulged the generous feelings which the recollection of fallen greatness is calculated to inspire; and commemorated the heroic valour which strove to sustain it in vain—valour worthy of a nobler cause and a happier fortune. On this occasion our bard took upon himself the office of poet-laureate, and produced an ode, which, though deficient in the complicated rhythm and polished versification that such composition require, might, on a fair competition, where energy of feeling and of expression were alone in question, have won the butt of Malmsey from the real laureate of that day.

The following extracts may serve as a specimen:

* * *
* * *

False flatterer, Hope, away!
Nor think to lure us as in days of yore
We solemnize this sorrowing natal day,
To prove our loyal truth—we can no more:
And, owning Heaven's mysterious sway
Submissive, low, adore.

Ye honour'd mighty dead!
Who nobly perish'd in the glorious cause,
Your king, your country, and her laws;

From great Dundee, who smiling victory led,
And fell a martyr in her arms,
(What breasts of northern ice but warms?)
To bold Balmerino's undying name,
Whose soul, of fire, lighted at Heaven's high flame,
Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim.

Not unrevenged your fate shall be;
It only lags the fatal hour;
Your blood shall with incessant cry
Awake at last th' unsparing power.
As from the cliff, with thundering course,
The snowy ruin smokes along,
With doubling speed and gathering force,
Till the deep it crushing whelms the cottage in the vale
So vengeance * * *

In relating the incidents of our poet's life in Edinburgh, we ought to have mentioned the sentiments of respect snd sympathy with which he traced out the grave of his predecessor Ferguson, over whose ashes, in the Cannongate church-yard, he obtained leave to erect a monument, which will be viewed by reflecting minds with no common interest, and which will awake, in the bosom of kindred genius, many a high emotion. Neither should we pass over the continued friendship he experienced from a poet then living, the amiable and accomplished Blacklock.—To his encouraging advice it was owing (as has already appeared) that Burns instead of emigrating to the West Indies, repaired to Edinburgh. He received him there with all the ardour of affectionate admiration; he blazoned his fame; he lavished upon him all the kindness of a generous heart into which nothing selfish or envious ever found admittance. Among the friends whom he introduced to Burns was Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, to whom our poet paid a visit in the autumn of 1787, at his delightful retirement in the neighbourhood of Stirling, and on the banks of the Teith. Of this we have the following particulars:

"I have been in the company of many men of genius," says Mr. Ramsay, "some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire! I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company for two days, tete-a-tete. In a mixed company I should have made little of him; for in the gamester's phrase, he did not always know when to play off and when to play on. . . I not only proposed to him the writing of a play similar to the *Gentle Shepherd, qualem decet esse sororem,* but *Scottish georgics,* a subject which Thomson has by no means exhausted in his Seasons. What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and so forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the *Gentle Shepherd,* which every one who knows our swains in the unadulterated state, instantly recognizes as true to nature. But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanting, not talents. When I asked him whether the Edinburgh Literati had mended his poems by their criticisms, 'Sir,' said he, 'these gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft nor woof.' He said he had not changed a word except one, to please Dr. Blair."*

Having settled with his publisher, Mr. Creech, in February, 1788, Burns found himself master of nearly five hundred pounds, after discharging all his expenses. Two hundred pound she immediately advanced to his brother Gilbert, who had taken upon himself the support of their aged mother, and was struggling with many difficulties in the farm of Mossgiel. With the remainder of his sum, and some further eventual profits from his poems, he determined on settling himself for life in the occupation of agricul-

* Extract of a letter from Mr. Ramsay to the Editor "This incorrigibility of Burns extended, however, only to his poems printed before he arrived in Edinburgh; for, in regard to his unpublished poems, he was amenable to criticism, of which many proofs may be given." See some remarks on this subject, in Appendix.

ture and took from Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the river Nith, six miles above Dumfries, on which he entered at Whitsunday, 1788. Having been previously recommended to the Board of Excise, his name had been put on the list of candidates for the humble office of a gauger or exciseman; and he immediately applied to acquiring the information necessary for filling that office, when the honourable Board might judge it proper to employ him.

He expected to be called into service in the district in which his farm was situated, and vainly hoped to unite with success the labours of the farmer with the duties of the exciseman.

When Burns had in this manner arranged his plans for futurity, his generous heart turned to the object of his most ardent attachment, and listening to no considerations but those of honour and affection, he joined with her in a public declaration of marriage, thus legalizing their union, and rendering it permanent for life.

Before Burns was known in Edinburgh, a specimen of his poetry had recommended him to Mr. Miller of Dalswinton. Understanding that he intended to resume the life of a farmer, Mr. Miller had invited him in the spring of 1787, to view his estate in Nithsdale, offering him at the same time the choice of any of his farms out of lease, at such a rent as Burns and his friends might judge proper. It was not in the nature of Burns to take an undue advantage of Mr. Miller. He proceeded in his business, however, with more than usual deliberation. Having made choice of the farm of Ellisland, he employed two of his friends skilled in the value of land, to examine it, and, with their approbation, offered a rent to Mr. Miller, which was immediately accepted. It was not convenient for Mrs. Burns to remove immediately from Ayrshire, and our poet therefore took up his residence alone at Ellisland, to prepare for the reception of his wife and children, who joined him towards the end of the year.

The situation in which Burns now found himself, was calculated to awaken reflection. The different steps he had of late taken were in their nature highly important, and might be said to have, in some measure, fixed his destiny. He had become a husband and a father: he had engaged in the management of a considerable farm, a difficult and laborious undertaking; in his success the happiness of his family were involved; it was time, therefore, to abandon the gaiety and dissipation of which he had been too much enamoured; to ponder seriously on the past, and to form virtuous resolutions respecting the future. That such was actually the state of his mind the following extract from his common-place book may bear witness:—

"*Ellisland, Sunday, 14th June*, 1788.

"This is now the third day that I have been in this country. 'Lord, what is man!' What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas and fancies! and what a capricious kind of existence he has here! . . There is indeed an elsewhere, where as Thompson says, *virtue sole survives.*

"Tell us, ye dead:
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,

What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
A little time
Will make us wise as you are, and as close."

"I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam, 'gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace.'

"But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half-sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jerico, *the water is naught and the ground barren*, and nothing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

"Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be any thing with me but names, was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in my present situation it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on *her* part to repent it.—I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come, then, let me act up to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

'On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man!'"

Under the impulse of these reflectings, Burns immediately engaged in rebuilding the dwelling-house on his farm, which, in the state he found it, was inadequate to the accommodation of his family. On this occasion, he himself resumed at times the occupation of a labourer, and found neither his strength nor his skill impaired. Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and as he fondly hoped, to his own grey hairs, sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic content and peace rose on his imagination; and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced.*

* Animated sentiments of any kind, almost always gave rise in our poet to some production of his music. His sentiments on this occasion were in part expressed by the following vigorous and characteristic, though not very delicate verses.

I HAE a wife o'my ain,
I'll partake wi' nae-body;
I'll tak cuckold frae nane,
I'll gie cuckold to nae-body.

I hae a penny to spend,
There—thanks to nae-body;
I hae naething to lend,
I'll borrow frae nae-body.

It is to be lamented that at this critical period of his life, our poet was without the society of his wife and children. A great change had taken place in his situation; his old habits were broken; and the new circumstances in which he was placed were calculated to give a new direction to his thoughts and conduct. But his application to the cares and labours of his farm was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire; and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he generally spent a night at an inn on the road. On such occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed. In a little while temptation assailed him near home.

His fame naturally drew upon him the attention of his neighbours, and he soon formed a general acquaintance in the district in which he lived. The public voice had now pronounced on the subject of his talents; the reception he had met with in Edinburgh had given him the currency which fashion bestows; he had surmounted the prejudices arising from his humble birth, and he was received at the table of the gentlemen of Nithsdale with welcome, with kindness, and even with respect. Their social parties too often seduced him from his rustic labours and his rustic fare, overthrew the unsteady fabric of his resolutions, and inflamed those propensities which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed. It was not long, therefore, before Burns began to view his farm with dislike and despondence, if not with disgust.

Unfortunately he had for several years looked to an office in the Excise as a certain means of livelihood, should his other expectations fail. As has already been mentioned, he had been recommended to the Board of Excise, and had received the instructions necessary for such a situation. He now applied to be employed; and by the interest of Mr. Graham of Fintra, was appointed to be exciseman, or, as it is vulgarly called gauger, of the district in which he lived. His farm was, after this, in a great measure abandoned to servants, while he betook himself to the duties of his new appointment.

He might indeed still be seen in the spring, directing his plough, a labour in which he excelled; or with a white sheet containing his seed-corn, slung across his shoulders, striding with measured steps along his turned-up furrows, and scattering the grain in the earth, but his farm no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue, among the hills and vales of Nithsdale, his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and *muttering his wayward fancies* as he moved along.

"I had an adventure with him in the year 1790," says Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, in a letter to the editor, "when passing through Dumfries-shire, on a tour to the south, with Dr. Steuart of Luss.

I am nae-body's lord,
I'll be slave to nae-body;
I hae a guid braid sword,
I'll tak dunts frae nae-body.

I'll be merry and free,
I'll be sad for nae-body;
If nae-body care for me,
I'll care for nae-body.

Seeing him pass quickly near Closeburn, I said to my companion 'that is Burns.' On coming to the inn, the hostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits; that where he met with any thing seizable he was no better than any other gauger, in every thing else, he was perfectly a gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics. In the evening he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, *stewed in haste*. In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast after receiving my note. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me that he had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to call *Rob Macquechan's Elshon*, from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the water of Cærn, when the heel of his boot having loosened in his flight, he applied to Robert Macquechan to fix it; who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the king's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr. S—— popped in his head; which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed, and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. S——'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain. * * * From that time we met no more, and I was grieved at the reports of him afterwards. Poor Burns! we shall hardly ever see his like again. He was, in truth, a sort of comet in literature, irregular in its motions, which did not do good proportioned to the blaze of light it displayed."

In the summer of 1791, two English gentlemen who had before met with him in Edinburgh, made a visit to him at Ellisland. On calling at the house, they were imformed that he had walked out on the banks of the river; and dismounting from their horses, they proceeded in search of him. On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous highland broad-sword. It was Burns. He received them with cordiality, and asked them to share his humble dinner—an invitation which they accepted. On the table they found boiled beef, with vegetables and broth, after the manner of Scotland, of which they partook heartily. After dinner, the bard told them ingenuously that he had no wine to offer them, nothing better than Highland whiskey, a bottle of which Mrs. Burns set on the board. He produced at the same time his punch-bowl made of Inverary marble, and mixing the spirits with water and sugar, filled their glasses, and invited them to drink. The travellers were in haste, and besides, the flavour of the whiskey to their *southron* palates was scarcely tolerable; but the generous poet offered them his best, and his ardent hospitality they found it impossible to resist. Burns was in his happiest mood, and the charms of his conversation were altogether fascinating. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related the tales of his infancy and of his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems; in the wildest

of his strains of mirth, he threw in touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his powerful mind. The highland whiskey improved in its flavour; the marble bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the guests of our poet forgot the flight of time, and the dictates of prudence: at the hour of midnight they lost their way in returning to Dumfries, and could scarcely distinguish it when assisted by the morning's dawn.

Besides his duties in the Excise and his social pleasures, other circumstances interfered with the attention of Burns to his farm. He engaged in the formation of a society for purchasing and circulating books among the farmers of his neighbourhood, of which he undertook the management; and he occupied himself occasionally in composing songs for the musical work of Mr. Johnson, then in the course of publication. These engagements, useful and honourable in themselves, contributed, no doubt, to the abstraction of his thoughts from the business of agriculture.

The consequences may be easily imagined. Notwithstanding the uniform prudence and good management of Mrs Burns, and though his rent was moderate and reasonable, our poet found it convenient if not necessary, to resign his farm to Mr. Miller; after having occupied it three years and a half. His office in the Excise had originally produced about fifty pounds per annum. Having acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the Board, he had been appointed to a new district, the emoluments of which rose to about seventy pounds per annum. Hoping to support himself and his family on this humble income till promotion should reach him, he disposed of his stock and of his crop on Ellisland by public auction, and removed to a small house which he had taken in Dumfries, about the end of the year 1791.

Hitherto Burns, though addicted, to excess, in social parties, had abstained from the habitual use of strong liquors, and his constitution had not suffered any permanent injury from the irregularities of his conduct. In Dumfries, temptations to *the sin that so easily beset him*, continually presented themselves; and his irregularities grew by degrees, into habits. These temptations unhappily occurred during his engagements in the business of his office, as well as during his hours of relaxation; and though he clearly foresaw the consequences of yielding to them, his appetites and sensations, which could not pervert the dictates of his judgment, finally triumphed over all the powers of his will. Yet this victory was not obtained without many obstinate struggles, and at times, temperance and virtue seemed to have obtained the mastery. Besides his engagements in the Excise, and the society into which they led, many circumstances contributed to the melancholy fate of Burns. His great celebrity made him an object of interest and curiosity to strangers, and few persons of cultivated minds passed through Dumfries without attempting to see our poet, and to enjoy the pleasure of his conversation. As he could not receive them under his own humble roof, these interviews passed at the inns of the town, and often terminated in those excesses which Burns sometimes provoked, and was seldom able to resist. And among the inhabitants of Dunfries and its vicinity, there were never wanting persons to share his social pleasures; to lead or accompany

him to the tavern; to partake in the wildest sallies of his wit; to witness the strength and degradation of his genius.

Still, however, he cultivated the society of persons of taste and respectability, and in their company would impose on himself the restraints of temperance and decorum. Nor was his muse dormant. In the four years which he lived in Dumfries, he produced many of his beautiful lyrics, though it does not appear that he attempted any poem of considerable length. During this time, he made several excursions into the neighbouring country, of one of which, through Galloway, an account is preserved in a letter of Mr. Slyme, written soon after; which, as it gives an animated picture of him by a correct and masterly hand, we shall present to the reader.

"I got Burns a grey Highland shelty to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July, 1793, at Glendenwynes of Parton; a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out, and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Low, the author of *Mary weep no more for me*. This was classical ground for Burns. He viewed "the highest hill which rises o'er the source of Dee;" and would have staid till "the passing spirit" had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmore that night. We arrived as Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting down to supper.

"Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the river Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful *holm*, till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which, on the south, present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural woods, and here and there a grey rock. On the north, the aspect is great, wild, and, I may say, tremendous. In short, I can scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the Castle of Kenmore. Burns thinks so highly of it, that he meditates a description of it in poetry. Indeed, I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr. Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs. Gordon's lap-dog, *Echo*, was dead. She would have an epitath for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to his distaff. He disliked the subject; but, to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced:—

In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
Your heavy loss deplore;
Now half extinct your powers of song,
Sweet Echo is no more.

Ye jarring, screeching things around,
Scream your discordant joys;
Now half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies.

"We left Kenmore, and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings

gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements *rumble their belly full* upon our defenceless heads. *Oh, oh! 'twas foul.* We got utterly wet; and to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse on our getting utterly drunk.

"From Gatehouse, we went next day to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of *jemmy* boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such a manner that it was not possible to get them on again.—The brawney poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whifling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to Saint Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a heart ache, lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accable.* I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of · · · · across the bay of Wigton. Against · · · with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one · · · · · whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him.

> When · · · · · deceased, to the devil went down,
> Twas nothing would serve him but Satan's own crown;
> Thy fool's head, quoth Satan, that crown you shall wear never,
> I grant thou'rt as wicked, but not quite so clever.

"Well, I am to bring you to Kirkcudbright along with our poet, without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and what is more, Lord Selkirk carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

"We reached Kirkcudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, J. Dalzell. But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary's Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St. Mary's Isle was the seat of a Lord; yet that Lord was not an aristocrate, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft but not tame object which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (as beautiful,) at home, and some strangers; and among others, who but Urbani! The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two

young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of Lord Gregory, which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite *his* ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns' Lord Gregory is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say, some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, "Thou bolt of Heaven that passest by;" and, "Ye mustering thunder," &c.; but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be *said* rather than *felt*.

"We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk's. We had, in every sense of the word, a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning, was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries, and so ends our peregrination. I told you, that in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kenmore, Burns was wrapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army, along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell.

'Scots wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled,' &c.

Burns had entertained hopes of promotion in the Excise; but circumstances occurred which retarded their fulfilment, and which in his own mind, destroyed all expectation of their ever being fulfilled. The extraordinary events which ushered in the revolution of France, interested the feelings, and excited the hopes of men in every corner of Europe. Prejudice and tyranny seemed about to disappear from among men, and the day-star of reason to rise upon a benighted world. In the dawn of this beautiful morning, the genius of French freedom appeared on our southern horizon with the countenance of an angel, but speedily assumed the features of a demon, and vanished in a shower of blood.

Though previously a Jacobite and a cavalier, Burns had shared in the original hopes entertained of this astonishing revolution, by ardent and benevolent minds. The novelty and the hazard of the attempt meditated by the First, or Constituent Assembly, served rather, it is probable, to recommend it to his daring temper; and the unfettered scope proposed to be given to every kind of talents, was doubtless gratifying to the feelings of conscious but indignant genius. Burns foresaw not the mighty ruin that was to be the immediate consequence of an enterprise, which, on its commencement, promised so much happiness to the human race. And even after the career of guilt and of blood commenced, he could not immediately, it may be presumed, withdraw his partial gaze from a people who had so lately breathed the sentiments of universal peace and benignity, or obliterate in his bosom the pictures of hope and

of happiness to which those sentiments had given birth. Under these impressions, he did not always conduct himself with the circumspection and prudence which his dependent situation seemed to demand. He engaged indeed in no popular associations, so common at the time of which we speak; but in company he did not conceal his opinions of public measures, or of the reforms required in the practice of our government; and sometimes, in his social and unguarded moments, he uttered them with a wild and unjustifiable vehemence. Information of this was given to the Board of Excise, with the exaggerations so general in such cases. A superior officer in that department was authorized to inquire into his conduct. Burns defended himself in a letter addressed to one of the board, written with great independence of spirit, and with more than his accustomed eloquence. The officer appointed to inquire into his conduct gave a favourable report. His steady friend, Mr. Graham of Fintra, interposed his good offices in his behalf; and the imprudent gauger was suffered to retain his situation, but given to understanp that his promotion was deferred, and must depend on his future behaviour.

This circumstance made a deep impression on the mind of Burns. Fame exaggerated his misconduct, and represented him as actually dismissed from his office: and this report induced a gentleman of much respectability to propose a subscription in his favour. The offer was refused by our poet in a letter of great elevation of sentiment, in which he gives an account of the whole of this transaction, and defends himself from imputation of disloyal sentiments on the one hand, and on the other, from the charge of having made submissions for the sake of his office, unworthy of his character.

"The partiality of my countrymen," he observes, "has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I hope have been found in the man. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and children, have pointed out my present occupation as the only eligible line of life within my reach. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. Often in blasting anticipation have I listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exultingly asserting that Burns notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held up to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the lowest of mankind.

"In your illustrious hands, sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal and defiance of such slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from his birth, and an exciseman by necessity; but—I *will* say it! the sterling of his honest worth, poverty could not debase, and his independent British spirit, oppression might bend, but could not subdue."

It was one of the last acts of his life to copy this letter into his

book of manuscripts, accompanied by some additional remarks on the same subject. It is not surprising, that at a season of universal alarm for the safety of the constitution, the indiscreet expressions of a man so powerful as Burns, should have attracted notice. The times certainly required extraordinary vigilance in those intrusted with the administration of the government, and to insure the safety of the constitution was doubtless their first duty. Yet generous minds will lament that their measures of precaution should have robbed the imagination of our poet of the last prop on which his hopes of independence rested, and by embittering his peace, have aggravated those excesses which were soon to conduct him to an untimely grave.

Though the vehemence of Burns's temper, increased as it often was by stimulating liquors, might lead him into many improper and unguarded expressions, there seems no reason to doubt of his attachment to our mixed form of government. In his commonplace book, where he could have no temptation to disguise, are the following sentiments.—"Whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I ever abjured the idea. A constitution which, in its original principles, experience has proved to be every way fitted for our happiness, it would be insanity to abandon for an untried visionary theory." In conformity to these sentiments, when the pressing nature of public affairs called in 1795 for a general arming of the people, Burns appeared in the ranks of the Dumfries volunteers, and employed his poetical talents in stimulating their patriotism; and at this season of alarm, he brought forward the following hymn, worthy of the Grecian muse, when Greece was most conspicuous for genius and valour.

SCENE—*A Field of Battle—Time of the day, Evening—the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following Song.*

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun;
Farewell loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties,
Our race of existence is run!

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slaves;
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know,
No terrors hast thou to the brave!

Thou strik'st the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name;
Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame!

In the field of proud honour—our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands
O! who would not rest with the brave!

Though by nature of an athletic form, Burns had in his constitution the peculiarities and the delicacies that belong to the temperament of genius. He was liable, from a very early period, to that interruption in the process of digestion, which arises from deep and anxious thought, and which is sometimes the effect, and sometimes the cause of depression of spirits. Connected with this disorder of the stomach, there was a disposition to head-ache, affecting more

especially the temples and eye-balls, and frequently accompanied by violent and irregular movements of the heart. Endowed by nature with great sensibility of nerves, Burns was, in his corporeal, as well as in his mental system, liable to inordinate impressions; to fever of body as well as of mind. This predisposition to disease, which strict temperance in diet, regular exercise, and sound sleep, migh have subdued, habits of a different nature strengthened and inflamed. Perpetually stimulated by alcohol in one or other of its various forms, the inordinate actions of the circulating system became at length habitual; the process of nutrition was unable to supply the waste, and the powers of life began to fail. Upwards of a year before his death, there was an evident decline in our poet's personal appearance, and though his appetite continued unimpaired he was himself sensible that his constitution was sinking. In his moments of thought he reflected with the deepest regret on this fatal progress, clearly forseeing the goal towards which he was hastening, without the strength of mind necessary to stop, or even to slacken his course. His temper now became more irritable and gloomy; he fled from himself into society, often of the lowest kind. And in such company, that part of the convivial scene, in which wine increases sensibility and excites benevolence, was hurried over, to reach the succeeding part, over which uncontrolled passion generally presided. He who suffers the pollution of inebriation, how shall he escape other pollution? But let us refrain from the mention of errors over which delicacy and humanity draw the veil.

In the midst of all his wanderings, Burns met nothing in his domestic circle but gentleness and forgiveness, except in the gnawings of his own remorse. He acknowledged his transgressions to the wife of his bosom, promised amendment, and again and again received pardon for his offences. But as the strength of his body decayed, his resolution became feebler, and habit acquired predominating strength.

From October, 1792, to the January following, an accidental complaint confined him to the house. A few days after he began to go abroad, he dined at a tavern, and returned home about three o'clock in a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated. This was followed by an attack of rheumatism, which confined him about a week. His appetite now began to fail; his hand shook, and his voice faltered on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and in the hands and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into a uniform gloom.

It was hoped by some of his friends, that if he could live through the months of spring, the succeeding season might restore him. But they were disappointed. The genial beams of the sun infused no vigour into his languid frame; the summer wind blew upon him, but produced no refreshment. About the latter end of June he was advised to go into the country, and impatient of medical advice, as well as of every species of control, he determined for himself to try the effects of bathing in the sea. For this purpose he took up his

residence at Brow, in Annandale, about ten miles east of Dumfries, on the shore of the Solway-Frith.

It happened that at that time a lady with whom he had been connected in friendship by the sympathies of kindred genius was residing in the immediate neighbourhood. Being informed of his arrival, she invited him to dinner, and sent her carriage for him to the cottage where he lodged, as he was unable to walk.—"I was struck," says this lady (in a confidential letter to a friend written soon after,) "with his appearance on entering the room. The stamp of death was impressed on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His salutation was 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped that he would yet live to write my epitaph. (I was then in a poor state of health.) He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expresed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling—as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation —in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth. He mentioned, with seeming pride and satisfaction, the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy's future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more perhaps from the reflection that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do. Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation: that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame.

"He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he should be sorry to wound; and many indifferent poetical pieces, which he feared would now with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers into a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion."—The lady goes on to mention many other topics of a private nature on which he spoke.—"The conversation," she adds, "was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable

degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge.

"We parted about sun-set on the evening of that day (the 5th of July, 1796;) the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more!"

At first, Burns imagined bathing in the sea had been of benefit to him: the pains in his limbs were relieved; but this was immediately followed by a new attack of fever. When brought back to his own house in Dumfries, on the 18th of July, he was no longer able to stand upright. At this time a tremor pervaded his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the second and third day the fever increased, and his strength diminished. On the fourth, the sufferings of this great, but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance.*

The death of Burns made a strong and general impression on all who had interested themselves in his character, and especially on the inhabitants of the town and county in which he had spent the latter years of his life. Flagrant as his follies and errors had been, they had not deprived him of the respect and regard entertained for the extraordinary powers of his genius, and the generous qualities of his heart. The Gentlemen-Volunteers of Dumfries determined to bury their illustrious associate with military honours, and every preparation was made to render this last service solemn and impressive. The Fencible Infantry of Angus-shire, and the regiment of cavalry of the Cinque Ports, at that time quartered in Dumfries, offered their assistance on this occasion; the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood determined to walk in the funeral procession; and a vast concourse of persons assembled, some of them from a considerable distance, to witness the obsequies of the Scottish Bard. On the evening of the 25th of July, the remains of Burns were removed from his house to the Town-Hall, and the funeral took place on the succeeding day. A party of the volunteers, selected to perform the military duty in the church-yard, stationed themselves in the front of the procession, with their arms reversed; the main body of the corps surrounded and supported the coffin, on which were placed the hat and sword of their friend and fellow-soldier; the numerous body of attendants ranged themselves in the rear; while the Fencible regiments of infantry and cavalry lined the streets from the Town-Hall to the burial-ground in the Southern church-yard, a distance of more than half a mile. The whole procession moved forward to that sublime and affecting strain of music, the *Dead March* in Saul; and three vollies fired over his grave marked the return of Burns to his parent earth! The spectacle was in a high degree grand and solemn, and accorded with the general sentiments of sympathy and sorrow which the occasion had called forth.

It was an affecting circumstance, that, on the morning of the day

* The particulars respecting the illness and death of Burns were obligingly furnished by Dr. Maxwell the physician who attended him.

of her husband's funeral, Mrs. Burns was undergoing the pains of labour, and that during the solemn service we have just been describing, the posthumous son of our poet was born. This infant boy, who received the name of Maxwell, was not destined to a long life. He has already become an inhabitant of the same grave with his celebrated father. The four other children of our poet, all sons (the eldest at that time about ten years of age) yet survive, and give every promise of prudence and virtue that can be expected from their tender years. They remain under the care of their affectionate mother in Dumfries, and are enjoying the means of education which the excellent schools of that town afford; the teachers of which, in their conduct to the children of Burns, do themselves great honour. On this occasion, the name of Mr. Whyte deserves to be particularly mentioned, himself a poet as well as a man of science.

Burns died in great poverty; but the independence of his spirit, and the exemplary prudence of his wife, had preserved him from debt. He had received from his poems a clear profit of about nine hundred pounds. Of this sum, the part expended on his library (which was far from extensive) and in the humble furniture of his house, remained; and obligations were found for two hundred pounds advanced by him to the assistance of those to whom he was united by the ties of blood, and still more by those of esteem and affection. When it is considered, that his expenses in Edinburgh, and on his various journeys, could not be inconsiderable; that his agricultural undertaking was unsuccessful; that his income from the Excise was for some time as low as fifty, and never rose to above seventy pounds a-year; that his family was large, and his spirit liberal—no one will be surprised that his circumstances were so poor, or that, as his health decayed, his proud and feeling heart sunk under the secret consciousness of indigence, and the apprehension of absolute want. Yet poverty never bent the spirit of Burns to any pecuniary meanness. Neither chicanery nor sordidness ever appeared in his conduct. He carried his disregard of money to a blameable excess. Even in the midst of distress he bore himself loftily to the world, and received with a jealous reluctance every offer of friendly assistance. His printed poems had procured him great celebrity, and a just and fair recompense for the latter offsprings of his pen might have produced him considerable emolument. In the year 1765, the Editor of a London newspaper, high in its character for literature, and independence of sentiment, made a proposal to him that he should furnish them, once a-week, with an article for their poetical department, and receive from them a recompense of fifty-two guineas per annum; an offer which the pride of genius disdained to accept. Yet he had for several years furnished, and was at that time furnishing the *Museum* of Johnson with his beautiful lyrics, without fee or reward, and was obstinately refusing all recompense for his assistance to the greater work of Mr. Thomson, which the justice and generosity of that gentleman was pressing upon him.

The sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family, pressed heavily on Burns as he lay on the bed of death. Yet he alluded to his indigence, at times, with something approaching to his wonted gaiety.—"What business," said he to

Dr. Maxwell, who attended him with the utmost zeal, "has a physician to waste his time on me? I am a poor pigeon, not worth plucking. Alas! I have not feathers enough to carry me to my grave." And when his reason was lost in delirium, his ideas ran in the same melancholy train. The horrors of a jail were still present to his troubled imagination, and produced the most affecting exclamations.

As for some months previous to his death he had been incapable of the duties of his office, Burns had imagined that his salary was reduced one half, as is usual in such cases. The Board, however, to their honour, continued his full emoluments; and Mr. Graham of Fintra, hearing of his illness, though unacquainted with its dangerous nature, made an offer of his assistance towards procuring him the means of preserving his health.—Whatever might be the faults of Burns, ingratitude was not of the number.—Amongst his manuscripts, various proofs are found of the sense he entertained of Mr. Graham's friendship, which delicacy towards that gentleman has induced us to suppress; and on the last occasion there is no doubt that his heart overflowed towards him, though he had no longer the power of expressing his feelings.*

On the death of Burns, the inhabitants of Dumfries and its neighbourhood opened a subscription for the support of his wife and family; and Mr. Miller, Mr. M'Murdo, Dr. Maxwell, and Mr. Syme, gentlemen of the first respectability, became trustees for the application of the money to its proper objects. The subscription was extended to other parts of Scotland, and of England also, particularly London and Liverpool. By this means a sum was raised amounting to seven hundred pounds; and thus the widow and children were rescued from immediate distress, and the most melancholy of the forebodings of Burns happily disappointed. It is true, this sum, though equal to their present support, is insufficient to secure them from future penury. Their hope in regard to futurity depends on the favourable reception of those volumes from the public at large, in the promoting of which the candour and humanity of the reader may induce him to lend his assistance.

Burns, as has already been mentioned, was nearly five feet ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The external appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view, his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his first manner and address, perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious eleva-

* The letter of Mr. Graham alluded to above, is dated on the 13th of July, and probably arrived on the 15th. Burns became delirious on the 17th or 18th, and died on the 21st.

tion, not, indeed, incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents.—Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire peasant, who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a singular power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion. But though jealous of the respect due to himself, Burns never enforced it where he saw it was willingly paid; and, though inaccessible to the approaches of pride, he was open to every advance of kindness and of benevolence. His dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a look of good will, of pity, or of tenderness; and, as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. The tones of his voice happily corresponded with the expression of his features, and with the feelings of his mind. When to these endowments are added a rapid and distinct apprehension, a most powerful understanding, and a happy command of language —of strength as well as brilliancy of expression—we shall be able to account for the extraordinary attractions of his conversation—for the sorcery which in his social parties he seemed to exert on all around him. In the company of women this sorcery was more especially apparent. Their presence charmed the fiend of melancholy in his bosom, and awoke his happiest feelings; it excited the powers of his fancy, as well as the tenderness of his heart; and, by restraining the vehemence and exuberance of his language, at times gave to his manners the impression of taste, and even of elegance, which in the company of men they seldom possessed. This influence was doubtless reciprocal. A Scottish Lady, accustomed to the best society, declared with characteristic *naivete*, that no man's conversation ever *carried her so completely off her feet* as that of Burns; and an English Lady, familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor, that in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled. The charm arose not more from the power than the versatility of his genius. No languor could be felt in the society of a man who passed at pleasure from *grave to gay*, from the ludicrous to the pathetic, from the simple to the sublime; who wielded all his faculties with equal strength and ease, and never failed to impress the offspring of his fancy with the stamp of his understanding.

This, indeed, is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties, he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn, jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature kind, brave, sincere, and in a singular degree compassionate, he was on the other hand proud, irascible, and vindictive. His virtues and failings had their origin in the extraordinary sensibility of his mind, and equally partook in the chills and glows of sentiment. His friendships were liable to interruption from jealousy or disgust, and his enmities died away under the influence of

pity or self-accusation. His understanding was equal to the other powers of his mind, and his deliberate opinions were singularly candid and just; but, like other men of great and irregular genius, the opinions which he delivered in conversation were often the offspring of temporary feelings, and widely different from the calm decisions of his judgment. This was not merely true respecting the characters of others, but in regard to some of the most important points of human speculation.

On no subject did he give a more striking proof of the strength of his understanding, than in the correct estimate he formed of himself. He knew his own failings; he predicted their consequence; the melancholy foreboding was never long absent from his mind; yet his passions carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course. The fatal defect in his character lay in the comparative weakness of his volition, that superior faculty of the mind, which governing the conduct according to the dictates of the understanding, alone entitles it to be denominated rational; which is the parent of fortitude, patience, and self-denial; which, by regulating and combining human exertions, may be said to have effected all that is great in the works of man, in literature, in science, or on the face of nature.—The occupations of a poet are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual control, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion, as well as to the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities; to nourish that lofty pride, which disdains the littleness of prudence, and the restrictions of order; and, by indulgence, to increase that sensibility, which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace or happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune.

It is observed by one who was a friend and associate of Burns, and who has contemplated and explained the system of animated nature, that no sentient being, with mental powers greater than those of men, could possibly live and be happy in this world.—"If such a being really existed," continued he, "his misery would be extreme. With senses more delicate and refined; with perceptions more acute and penetrating; with a taste so exquisite that the objects around him would by no means gratify it; obliged to feed on nourishment too gross for his frame; he must be born only to be miserable; and the continuation of his existence would be utterly impossible. Even in our present condition, the sameness and the insipidity of objects and pursuits, the futility of pleasure, and the infinite sources of excruciating pain, are supported with great difficulty by cultivated and refined minds. Increase our sensibilities, continue the same objects and situation, and no man could bear to live."

Thus it appears, that our powers of sensation, as well as our other powers, are adapted to the scene of our existence; that they are limited in mercy, as well as in wisdom.

The speculations of Mr. Smellie are not to be considered as the dreams of a theorist; they were probably founded on sad experience. The being he supposes, "with senses more delicate and re-

fined, with perceptions more acute and penetrating," is to be found in real life. He is the temperament of genius, and perhaps a poet. Is there, then, no remedy for this inordinate sensibility? Are there no means by which the happiness of one so constituted by nature may be consulted? Perhaps it will be found, that regular and constant occupation, irksome though it may first be, is the true remedy. Occupation in which the powers of the understanding are exercised, will diminish the force of external impressions, and keep the imagination under restraint.

That the bent of every man's mind should be followed in his education and in his destination in life, is a maxim which has been often repeated, but which cannot be admitted without many restrictions. It may be generally true when applied to weak minds, which, being capable of little, must be encouraged and strengthened in the feeble impulses by which that little is produced. But where indulgent nature has bestowed her gifts with a liberal hand, the very reverse of this maxim ought frequently to be the rule of conduct. In minds of a higher order, the object of instruction and of discipline is very often to restrain rather than to impel; to curb the impulses of imagination so that the passions also may be kept under control. Hence the advantages, even in a moral point of view, of studies of a severe nature, which, while they inform the understanding, employ the volition, that regulating power of the mind, which like all our other faculties, is strengthened by exercise, and on the superiority of which, virtue, happiness, and honourable fame, are wholly dependent. Hence also the advantage of regular and constant application, which aids the voluntary power by the production of habits so necessary to the support of order and virtue, and so difficult to be formed in the temperament of genius.

The man who is so endowed and so regulated, may pursue his course with confidence in almost any of the various walks of life which choice or accident shall open to him; and provided he employs the talents he has cultivated, may hope for such imperfect happiness, and such limited success, as are reasonably expected from human exertions.

The pre-eminence among men, which procures personal respect, and which terminates in lasting reputation, is seldom or never obtained by the excellence of a single faculty of mind. Experience teaches us, that it has been acquired by those only who have possessed the comprehension and the energy of general talents, and who have regulated their application, in the line which choice, or perhaps accident may have determined, by the dictates of their judgment. Imagination is supposed, and with justice, to be the leading faculty of the poet. But what poet has stood the test of time by the force of this single faculty? Who does not see that Homer and Shakspeare excelled the rest of their species in understanding as well as in imagination? that they were pre-eminent in the highest species of knowledge—the knowledge of the nature and character of man? On the other hand, the talent of ratiocination is more especially requisite to the orator; but no man ever attained the palm of oratory, even by the highest exercise in this single talent, who does not perceive that Demosthenes and Cicero were not more happy in their addresses to the reason, than in their appeals to

the passions? they knew that to excite, to agitate, and to delight, are among the most potent arts of persuasion; and they enforced their impression on the understanding, by their command of all the sympathies of the heart. These observations might be extended to other walks of life. He who has the faculties fitted to excel in poetry, has the faculties which, duly governed and differently directed, might lead to pre-eminence in other, and as far as respects himself, perhaps in happier destinations. The talents necessary to the construction of an Iliad, under discipline and application, might have led armies to victory, or kingdoms to prosperity: might have wielded the thunder of eloquence, or discovered and enlarged the sciences that constitute the power, and improve the condition of our species.

Such talents are, indeed, rare among the productions of nature, and occasions of bringing them into full exertion are rarer still. But safe and salutary occupations may be found for men of genius in every direction, while the useful and ornamental arts remain to be cultivated, while the sciences remain to be studied and to be extended, and the principles of science to be applied to the correction and improvement of art. In the temperament of sensibility, which is in truth the temperament of general talents, the principal object of discipline and instruction is, as has already been mentioned, to strengthen the self-command; and this may be promoted by the direction of the studies, more effectually perhaps than has been generally understood.

If these observations be founded in truth, they may lead to practical consequences of some importance. It has been too much the custom to consider the possession of poetical talents as excluding the possibility of application to the severer branches of study, and in some degree incapacitating the possessor from attaining those habits, and from bestowing that attention, which are necessary to success in the details of business, and in the engagements of active life. It has been common for persons conscious of such talents, to look with a sort of disdain on other kinds of intellectual excellence, and to consider themselves as in some degree absolved from those rules of prudence by which humbler minds are restricted. They are too much disposed to abandon themselves to their own sensations, and to suffer life to pass away without any regular exertion or settled purpose.

But though men of genius are generally prone to indolence, with them indolence and unhappiness are in a more special way allied. The unbidden splendours of imagination may indeed at times irradiate the gloom which inactivity produces; but such visions, though bright, are transient, and serve to cast the realities of life into deeper shade. In bestowing great talents, Nature seems very generally to have imposed on the possessor the necessity of exertion, if he would escape wretchedness. Better for him than sloth, toils the most painful, or adventures the most hazardous. Happier to him than idleness, were the condition of the peasant, earning with incessant labour his scanty food; or that of the sailor, though hanging on the yard-arm, and wrestling with the hurricane.

These observations might be amply illustrated by the biography of men of genius of every denomination, and more especially by

the biography of the poets. Of this last description of men, few seem to have enjoyed the usual portion of happiness that falls to the lot of humanity, those excepted who have cultivated poetry as an elegant amusement in the hours of relaxation from other occupations, or the small number who have engaged with success in the greater or more arduous attempts of the muse, in which all the faculties of the mind have been fully and permanently employed. Even taste, virtue, and comparative independence, do not seem capable of betowing, on men of genius, peace and tranquillity, without such occupation as may give regular and healthful exercise to the faculties of body and mind. The amiable Shenstone has left us the records of his imprudence, of his indolence, and of his unhappiness, amidst the shades of the Leasowes;* and the virtues, the learning, and the genius of Gray, equal to the loftiest attempt of the epic muse, failed to procure him in the academic bowers of Cambridge, the tranquillity and that respect which less fastidiousness of taste, and greater constancy and vigour of exertion, would have doubtless obtained.

It is more necessary that men of genius should be aware of the importance of self-command, and of exertion, because their indolence is peculiarly exposed, not merely to unhappiness, but to disease of mind, and to errors of conduct, which are generally fatal. This interesting subject deserves a particular investigation: but we must content ourselves with one or two cursory remarks. Relief is sometimes sought for the melancholy of indolence in practices, which for a time soothe and gratify the sensations, but which in the end involve the sufferer in darker gloom. To command the external circumstances by which happiness is affected, it is not in human power: but there are various substances in nature which operate on the system of the nerves, so as to give a fictitious gaiety to the ideas of imagination, and to alter the effect of the external impressions which we receive. Opium is chiefly employed for this purpose by the disciples of Mahomet, and the inhabitants of Asia; but alcohol, the principle of intoxication in vinous and spiritous liquors, is preferred in Europe, and is universally used in the Christian world. Under the various wounds to which indolent sensibility is exposed, and under the gloomy apprehensions respecting futurity to which it is so often a prey, how strong is the temptation to have recourse to an antidote by which the pain of these wounds is suspended by which the heart is exhilerated, ideas of hope and happiness are excited in the mind, add the forms of external nature clothed hith new beauty?—

> Elysium opens round,
> A pleasing frenzy buoys the lighten'd soul,
> And sanguine hopes dispel your fleeting care;
> And what was difficult, and what was dire,
> Yields to your prowess, and superior stars:
> The happiest of you all that e'er were mad,
> Or are, or shall be, could this folly last.
> But soon your heaven is gone; a heavier gloom
> Shut o'er your head ——
>
> ——— Morning comes; your cares return
> With tenfold rage. An anxious stomach well

* See his letters, which, as a display of the effects of poetical idleness, ar highly instructive.

> May be endured: so may the throbing head:
> But such a dim delirium, such a dream
> Involves you! such a dastardly despair
> Unmans your soul, as madd'ning Pentheus felt,
> When baited round Cithæron's cruel sides,
> He saw two suns and double Thebes ascend.
>
> ARMSTRONG'S Art of Preserving Health. b. iv. l. 163.

Such are the pleasures and the pains of intoxication, as they occur in the temperament of sensibility, described by a genuine poet, with a degree of truth and energy which nothing but experience could have dictated. There are, indeed, some individuals of this temperament on whom wine produces no cheering influence. On some, even in very moderate quantities, its effects are painfully irritating; in large doses it excites dark and melancholy ideas; and in doses still larger, the fierceness of insanity itself. Such men are happily exempted from a temptation, to which experiences teaches us the finest dispositions often yield, and the influence of which, when strengthened by habit, it is a humiliating truth, that the most powerful minds have not been able to resist.

It is the more necessary for men of genius to be on their guard against the habitual use of wine, because it is apt to steal on them insensibly; and because the temptation to excess usually presents itself to them in their social hours, when they are alive only to warm and generous emotions, and when prudence and moderation are often contemned as selfishness and timidity.

It is more necessary for them to guard against excess in the use of wine, because on them its effects are physically and morally, in an especial manner injurious. In proportion to its stimulating influence on the system (on which the pleasurable sensations depend,) is the debility that ensues; a debility that destroys digestion, and terminates in habitual fever, dropsy, jaundice, paralysis, or insanity. As the strength of the body decays, the volition fails; in proportion as the sensations are soothed and gratified, the sensibility increases; and morbid sensibility is the parent of indolence, because, while it impairs the regulating power of the mind, it exaggerates all the obstacles to exertion. Activity, perseverance, and self-command, become more and more difficult, and the great purposes, of utility, patriotism, or of honourable ambition, which had occupied the imagination, die away in fruitless resolutions, or in feeble efforts.

To apply these observations to the subject of our memoirs, would be a useless as well as a painful task. It is, indeed, a duty we owe to the living, not to allow our admiration of great genius, or even our pity for its unhappy destiny, to conceal or disguise its errors. But there are sentiments of respect, and even of tenderness, with which this duty should be performed; there is an awful sanctity which invests the mansions of the dead; and let those who moralize over the graves of their contemporaries, reflect with humility one their own errors, nor forget how soon they may themselves require the candour and the sympathy they are called upon to bestow.

Soon after the death of Burns, the following article appeared in the Dumfries Journal, from which it is copied into the Edinburgh newspapers, and into various other periodical publications. It is

from the elegant pen of a lady already alluded to in the course of these memoirs, whose exertions for the family of our bard, in the circles of literature and fashion in which she moves, have done her so much honour.

"It is not probable that the late mournful event which is likely to be felt severely in the literary world, as well as in the circle of private friendship which surrounded our admired poet, should be unattended with the usual profusion of posthumous anecdotes, memoirs, &c. that commonly spring up at the death of every rare and celebrated personage. I shall not attempt to enlist with the numerous corps of biographers, who, it is probable may without possessing his genius, arrogate to themselves the privilege of criticising the character or writings of Mr. Burns. 'The inspiring mantle' thrown over him by that tutelarly muse who first found him, like the prophet Elisha, 'at his plough' has been the portion of few, may be the portion of fewer still; and if it is true that men of genius have a claim in their literary capacities to the legal right of the British citizen in a court of justice, that of *being tried only by his peers*, (I borrow here an expression I have frequently heard Burns himself make use of,) God forbid I should, any more than the generality of other people, assume the flattering and peculiar privilege of sitting upon his jury. But the intimacy of our acquaintance for several years past, may perhaps justify my presenting to the public a few of those ideas and observations I have had the opportunity of forming, and which, to the day that closed for ever the scene of his happy qualities and of his errors, I have never had the smallest cause to deviate in, or to recall.

"It will be the misfortune of Burns' reputation, in the records of literature, not only to future generations and to foreign countries, but even with his native Scotland and a number of his contemporaries, that he has been regarded as a poet, and nothing but a poet. It must not be supposed that I consider this title as a trivial one; no person can be more penetrated with the respect due to the wreath bestowed by the muses than myself; and much certainly is due to the merit of a self taught bard, deprived of the advantages of a classical education, and the intercourse of minds congenial to his own, till that period of life, when his native fire, had already blazed forth in all its wild graces of genuine simplicity and energetic eloquence of sentiment. But the fact is, that even when all his honours are yielded to him, Burns will perhaps be found to move in a sphere less splendid, less dignified, and, even in his own pastoral style, less attractive, than several other writers have done; and the poetry was (I appeal to all who have had the advantage of being personally acquainted with him) actually not his forte. If others have climbed more successfully to the heights of Parnassus, none certainly ever out-shone Burns in the charms—the sorcery I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation; the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee. His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent with the qualifications of his mind. His form was manly; his action energy itself; devoid, in a great measure, however, of those graces of that polish, acquired only in the refinement of societies,

where in early life he had not the opportunity to mix; but where such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him, though his appearance and manners were always peculiar, he never failed to delight and to *excel*. His figure certainly bore the authentic impress of his birth and original station in life; it seemed rather moulded by nature for the rough exercise of agriculture, than the gentler cultivation of the *belles lettres*. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence, and the firmness of conscious, though not arrogant pre-eminence. I believe no man was ever gifted with a larger portion of the *vivida vis animi*: the animated expressions of his countenance were almost peculiar to himself. The rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the impassioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye; sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent sallies of enthusiastic patriotism. The keeness of satire was, (I am almost at a loss whether to say his *forte* or his foible;) for though nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that 'perilous gift,' he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded animosities. It was not only that sportiveness of humour, that 'unwary pleasantry,' which Sterne has described to us with touches so conciliatory; but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or the altercations of parties or of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This was not, however, unexceptionably the case, his wit (which is no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of raillery uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied by the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full pointed *bon mot*, from the dread of injuring its object, the sage of Zurich very properly classes as a virtue 'only to be sought for in the calendar of saints;' if so, Burns must not be dealt with unconscientiously for being rather deficient in it. He paid the forfeit of his talents as dearly as any one could do. 'Twas no extravagant arithmetic to say of him, as of Yorick, that for every ten jokes he got a hundred enemies;' and much allowance should be made by a candid mind for the spenetic warmth of a spirit 'which distress had often spited with the world,' and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. The vivacity of his wishes and temper was indeed checked by constant disappointments, which sat heavy on a heart that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence, without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury. His soul was never languid or inactive, and his genius was extinguished only with the last sparks of retreating life. His passions rendered him, according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy, the object of enthusiastic attachment, or of decided enmity; for he possessed none of that negative insipidity of character, whose love might be regarded with indif-

ference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt. In this it should seem the temper of his companions took the tincture from his own; for he acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects, those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontrollable; and it has been frequently asserted of him, that unsusceptible of indifference, often hating where he ought to have despised, he alternately opened his heart, and poured forth all the treasures of his understanding to such as were incapable of appreciating the homage, and elevated to the privileges of an adversary, some who were unqualified in talents, or by nature, for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

"It is said that the celebrated Dr. Johnson professed to 'love a good hater,'—a temperament that had singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our bard, who perhaps fell little short even of the surly Doctor in this qualification, as long as the disposition to ill-will continued; but the fervour of his passions was fortunately tempered by their versatility. He was seldom, never indeed implacable in his resentments, and sometimes, it has been alleged, not inviolably steady in his engagements of friendship. Much indeed has been said of his inconstancy and caprices: but I am inclined to believe, they originated less from a levity of sentiment, than from an impetuosity of feeling, that rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he had fancied he had discovered the traces of unkindness, scorn or neglect, took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiment which preceded them, and which seldom failed to regain its ascendency in his bosom on the return of calmer reflections. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced tenfold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organized only for the stronger and more acute operation of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy.

"It has been observed, that he was far from averse to the incense of flattery, and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed in that way himself; where he paid a compliment, it might indeed claim the power of intoxication, as approbation from him was always an honest tribute from the warmth and sincerity of his heart. It has been sometimes represented by those who it should seem had a view to detract from, though they could not hope wholly to obscure that native brilliancy, which the power of this extraordinary man had invariably bestowed on every thing that came from his lips or pen, that the history of the Ayrshire ploughboy was an ingenious fiction, fabricated for the purpose of obtaining the interests of the great, and enhancing the merits of what in reality required no foil. The Cotter's Saturday Night, Tam o' Shanter, and the Mountain Daisy, besides a number of later productions, where the maturity of his genius will be readily traced, and which will be given the public as soon as his friends have collected and arranged them, speak suf-

ficiently for themselves; and had they fallen from a hand more dignified in the ranks of society than that of a peasant, they had perhaps bestowed as unusual a grace there, as even in the humbler shade of rustic inspiration from whence they really sprung.

"To the obscure scene of Burn's education, and to the laborious, though honourable station of rural industry, in which his parentage enrolled him, almost every inhabitant in the south of Scotland can give testimony. His only surviving brother, Gilbert Burns, now guides the ploughshare of his forefathers in Ayrshire, at a small farm near Mauchline; and our poet's eldest son, (a lad of nine years of age, whose early dispositions already prove him to be the inheritor of his father's talents as well as indigence,) has been destined by his family to the humble employments of the loom.

"That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact that can be indisputably proved. I have seldom seen him at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers were the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me why he never took pains to acquire the Latin, in particular, a language which his happy memory had so soon enabled him to be master of, he used only to reply with a smile, that he already knew all the Latin he desired to learn and that was, *omnia vincit amor;* a phrase, that from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem he was most thoroughly versed in; but I really believe his classical erudition extended little, if any, further.

"The penchant Mr. Burns had uniformily acknowledged for the festive pleasures of the table, and towards the fairer and softer objects of nature's creation, has been the rallying point where the attacks of his censors, both pious and moral, have been directed; and to these, it must be confessed, he showed himself no stoic. His poetical pieces blend with alternate happiness of description, the frolic spirit of the joy inspiring bowl, or melt the heart to the tender and impassioned sentiments in which beauty always taught him to pour forth his own. But who would wish to reprove the failings he has consecrated with such lively touches of nature? And where is the rugged moralist who will persuade us so far to 'chill the genial current of the soul,' as to regret that Ovid ever celebrated his Corinna, or that Anacreon sung beneath his vine?

"I will not, however, undertake to be the apologist of the irregularities, even of a man of genius, though I believe it is certainly understood that genius never was free of irregularities, as that their absolution may in a great measure be justly claimed, since it is certain that the world had continued very stationary in its intellectual acquirements, had it never given birth to any but men of plain sense. Evenness of conduct, and a due regard to the decorums of the world, have been so rarely seen to move hand in hand with genius, that some have gone as far as to say, though there I cannot acquiesce, that they are even incompatible; besides, the frailties that cast their shade over superior merit, are more conspicuously glaring, than where they are the attendants of mere mediocrity: it is only on the gem we are disturbed to see the dust; the pebble may be soiled, and we never mind it. The eccentric intuitions

of genius, too often yield the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally dangerous to the repose of others as fatal to its own. No wonder then if virtue herself be sometimes lost in the blaze of kindling animation, or that the calm monitions of reason were not found sufficient to fetter an imagination, which scorned the narrow limits and restrictions that would chain it to the level of ordinary minds. The child of nature, the child of sensibility, unbroke to the refrigerative precepts of philosophy, untaught always to vanquish the passions which were the only source of his frequent errors, Burns makes his own artless apology in terms more forcible, than all the argumentatory vindications in the world could do, in one of his poems, where he delineates, with his usual simplicity, the progress of his mind, and its first expansion to the lessons of the tutelary muse.

I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By Passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray,
Was light from Heav'n.

"I have already transgressed far beyond the bounds I had proposed to myself, on first committing to paper these sketches, which comprehend what at least I have been led to deem the leading features of Burns's mind and character. A critique, either literary or moral, I do not aim at; mine is wholly fulfilled, if in these paragraphs I have been able to delineate any of those strong traits that distinguished him, of those talents which raised him from the plough, where he passed the bleak morning of his life, weaving his rude wreaths of poesy with the wild field-flowers that sprung round his cottage to that enviable eminence of literary fame, where Scotland will long cherish his memory with delight and gratitude; and proudly remember, that beneath her cold sky, a genius was ripened without care or culture, that would have done honour to the genial temperature of climes better adapted to cherishing its germs; to the perfecting of those luxuriances, that warmth of fancy and colouring, in which he so eminently excelled.

"From several paragraphs I have noticed in the public prints, even since the idea of sending these thither was formed, I find private animosities are not yet subsided, and envy has not yet done her part. I still trust that honest fame will be affixed to Burns's reputation, which he will be found to have merited by the candid of his countrymen; and where a kindred bosom is found that has been taught to glow with the fires that animated Burns, should a recollection of the imprudences that sullied his brighter qualifications interpose, let him remember at the same time the imperfection of all human excellence; and leave those inconsistencies which alternately exalted his nature to the seraph, and sunk it again into the man, to the tribunal which alone can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart—

'Where they alike in trembling hope repose;—
The bosom of his father, and his God.'

GRAY'S ELEGY.

"ANNANDALE, Aug. 7. 1796."

After this account of the life and personal character of Burns, it may be expected that some inquiry should be made into his literary merits. It will not however be necessary to enter very minutely into this investigation. If fiction be, as some suppose, the soul of poetry, no one had ever less pretensions to the name of poet than Burns. Though he has displayed great powers of imagination, yet the subjects on which he has written, are seldom, if ever, imaginary; his poems, as well as his letters, may be considered as the effusions of his sensibility, and the transcript of his own musings on the real incidents of his humble life. If we add, that they also contain most happy delineations of the characters, manners, and scenery that presented themselves to his observation, we shall include almost all the subjects of his muse. His writings may therefore be regarded as affording a great part of the data on which our account of his personal character has been founded; and most of the observations we have applied to the man, are applicable, with little variation, to the poet.

The impression of his birth, and of his original station in life, was not more evident on his form and manners, than on his poetical productions. The incidents which form the subjects of his poems, though some of them highly interesting, and susceptible of poetical imagery, are incidents in the life of a peasant who takes no pains to disguise the lowliness of his condition, or to throw into shade the circumstances attending it, which more feeble or more artificial minds would have endeavoured to conceal. The same rudeness and inattention appears in the formation of his rhymes, which are frequently incorrect, while the measures in which many of the poems are written has little of the pomp or harmony of modern versification, and is indeed, to an English ear, strange and uncouth. The greater part of his earlier poems are written in the dialect of his country, which is obscure, if not unintelligible to Englishmen, and which, though it still adheres more or less to the speech of almost every Scotchman, all the polite and the ambitious are now endeavouring to banish from their tongues as well as their writings. The use of it in composition naturally therefore calls up ideas of vulgarity in the mind. These singularities are increased by the character of the poet, who delights to express himself with a simplicity that approaches to nakedness, and with an unmeasured energy that often alarms delicacy, and sometimes offends taste. Hence, in approaching him, the first impression is perhaps repulsive: there is an air of coarseness about him, which is difficultly reconciled with our established notions of poetical excellence.

As the reader, however, becomes better acquainted with the poet, the effects of his peculiarities lessen. He perceives in his poems, even on the lowest subjects, expressions of sentiment, and delineations of manners, which are highly interesting. The scenery he describes is evidently taken from real life; the characters he introduces, and the incidents he relates, have the impression of nature and truth. His humour, though wild and unbridled, is irresistibly amusing, and is sometimes heightened in its effects by the introduction of emotions of tenderness, with which genuine humour so happily unites. Nor is this the extent of his power. The reader, as he examines farther, discovers that the poet is not confined to the

descriptive, the humourous, or the pathetic: he is found, as occasion offers, to rise with ease into the terrible and the sublime. Every where he appears devoid of artifice, performing what he attempts with little apparent effort; and impressing on the offspring of *his fancy the stamp of his understanding.* The reader, capable of forming a just estimate of poetical talent, discovers in these circumstances marks of uncommon genius, and is willing to investigate more minutely its nature and its claim to originality. This last point we shall examine first.

That Burns had not the advantages of a classical education, or of any degree of acquaintance with the Greek or Roman writers in their original dress, has appeared in the history of his life. He acquired, indeed, some knowledge of the French language, but it does not appear that he was ever much conversant in French literature, nor is there any evidence of his having derived any of his poetical stories from that source. With the English classics he became well acquainted in the course of his life, and the effects of this acquaintance are observable in his latter productions; but the character and style of his poetry were formed very early, and the model which he followed, in as far as he can be said to have had one, is to be sought for in the works of the poets who have written in the Scottish dialect—in the works of such of them more especially, as are familiar to the peasantry of Scotland. Some observations on these may form a proper introduction to a more particular examination of the poetry of Burns. The studies of the editor in this direction are indeed very recent and very imperfect. It would have been imprudent for him to have entered on this subject at all, but for the kindness of Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, whose assistance he is proud to acknowledge, and to whom the reader must ascribe whatever is of any value in the following imperfect sketch of literary compositions in the Scottish idiom.

It is a circumstance not a little curious, and which does not seem to be satisfactorily explained, that in the thirteenth century, the language of the two British nations, if at all different, differed only in dialect, the Gaelic in the one, like the Welch and Armoric in the other, being confined to the mountainous districts. The English under the Edwards, and the Scots under Wallace and Bruce, spoke the same language. We may observe also, that in Scotland the history ascends to a period nearly as remote as in England. Barbour and Blind Harry, James the First, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lindsay, who lived in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, were coeval with the fathers of poetry in England; and in the opinion of Mr. Wharton, not inferior to them in genius or in composition. Though the language of the two countries gradually deviated from each other during this period, yet the difference on the whole was not considerable; nor perhaps greater than between the different dialects of the different parts of England in our own time.

At the death of James the Fifth, in 1542, the language of Scotland was in a flourishing condition, wanting only writers in prose equal to those in verse. Two circumstances, propitious on the whole, operated to prevent this. The first was the passion of the Scots for composition in Latin; and the second, the accession of James the Sixth to the English throne. It may easily be imagined,

that if Buchanan had devoted his admirable talents, even in part, to the cultivation of his native tongue, as was done by the revivers of letters in Italy, he would have left compositions in that language which might have excited other men of genius to have followed his example, and given duration to the language itself. The union of the two crowns in the person of James, overthrew all reasonable expectation of this kind. That monarch, seated on the English throne, would no longer be addressed in the rude dialect in which the Scottish clergy had so often insulted his dignity. He encouraged Latin or English only, both of which he prided himself on writing with purity, though he himself never could acquire the English pronunciation, but spoke with a Scottish idiom and intonation to the last. Scotsmen of talents declined writing in their native language, which they knew was not acceptable to their learned and pedantic monarch; and at a time when national prejudice and enmity prevailed to a great degree, they disdained to study the niceties of the English tongue, though of so much easier acquisition than a dead language. Lord Stirling and Drummond of Hawthorden, the only Scotsmen who wrote poetry in those times, were exceptions. They studied the language of England, and composed in it with precision and elegance. They were however the last of their countrymen who deserved to be considered as poets in that century. The muses of Scotland sunk into silence, and did not again raise their voices for a period of eighty years.

To what causes are we to attribute this extreme depression among a people comparatively learned, enterprising, and ingenious? Shall we impute it to the fanaticism of the covenanters, or to the tyranny of the house of Stuart after their restoration to the throne? Doubtless these causes operated, but they seem unequal to account for the effect. In England, similar distractions and oppressions took place, yet poetry flourished there in a remarkable degree. During this period, Cowley, and Waller, and Dryden sung, and Milton raised his strain of unparalleled grandeur. To the cause already mentioned, another must be added, in accounting for the torpor of Scottish literature—the want of a proper vehicle for men of genius to employ. The civil wars had frightened away the Latin muses, and no standard had been established of the Scottish tongue, which was deviating still farther from the pure English idiom.

The revival of literature in Scotland may be dated from the establishment of the union, or rather from the extinction of the rebellion in 1715. The nations being finally incorporated, it was clearly seen that their tongues must in the end incorporate also; or rather indeed that the Scottish language must degenerate into a provincial idiom, to be avoided by those who would aim at distinction in letters, or rise to eminence in the united legislature.

Soon after this, a band of men of genius appeared, who studied the English classics, and imitated their beauties, in the same manner as they studied the classics of Greece and Rome. They had admirable models of composition lately presented to them by the writers of the reign of Queen Anne; particularly in the periodical papers published by Steele, Addison, and their associated friends, which circulated widely through Scotland, and diffused every where a taste for purity of style and sentiment, and for critical dis-

quisition. At length, the Scottish writers succeeded in English composition, and a union was formed of the literary talents, as well as of the legislatures of the two nations. On this occasion the poets took the lead. While Henry Home, Dr. Wallace, and their learned associates, were only laying in their intellectual stores, and studying to clear themselves of their Scottish idioms, Thomson, Mallet, and Hamilton of Bangour, had made their appearance before the public, and been enrolled on the list of English poets. The writers in prose followed—a numerous and powerful band, and poured their ample stores into the general stream of British literature. Scotland possessed her four universities before the accession of James to the English throne. Immediately before the union, she acquired her parochial schools. These establishments combining happily together, made the elements of knowledge of easy acquisition, and presented a direct path, by which the ardent student might be carried along into the recesses of science or learning. As civil broils ceased, and faction and prejudice gradually died away, a wider field was opened to literary ambition, and the influence of the Scottish institutions for instruction, on the productions of the press, became more and more apparent.

It seems, indeed, probable, that the establishment of the parochial schools produced effects on the rural muse of Scotland also, which have not hitherto been suspected, and which, though less splendid in their nature, are not however to be regarded as trivial, whether we consider the happiness or the morals of the people.

There is some reason to believe, that the original inhabitants of the British isles possessed a peculiar and interesting species of music, which being banished from the plains by the successive invasions of the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, was preserved with the native race, in the wilds of Ireland, and in the mountains of Scotland and Wales. The Irish, the Scottish, and the Welch music, differ, indeed, from each other, but the difference may be considered as in dialect only, and probably produced by the influence of time, like the different dialects of their common language. If this conjecture be true, the Scottish music must be more immediately of a Highland origin, and the Lowland tunes, though now of a character somewhat distinct, must have descended from the mountains in remote ages. Whatever credit may be given to conjectures, evidently involved in great uncertainty, there can be no doubt that the Scottish peasantry have been long in possession of a number of songs and ballads composed in their native dialect, and sung to their native music. The subjects of these compositions were such as most interested the simple inhabitants, and in the succession of time, varied probably as the condition of society varied. During the separation and the hostility of the two nations, these songs and ballads, as far as our imperfect documents enable us to judge, were chiefly warlike; such as the *Hunts of Cheviot*, and the *Battle of Harlaw*. After the union of the two crowns, when a certain degree of peace and tranquility took place, the rural muse of Scotland breathed in softer accents. "In the want of real evidence respecting the history of our songs," says Ramsay of Ochertyre, "recourse may be had to conjecture. One would be disposed to think, that

the most beautiful of the Scottish tunes were clothed with new words after the union of the crowns. The inhabitants of the borders, who had formerly been warriors from choice, and husbandmen from necessity, either quitted the country, or were transformed into real shepherds, easy in their circumstances, and satisfied with their lot. Some sparks of that spirit of chivalry for which they are celebrated by Froissart, remained sufficient to inspire elevation of sentiment and gallantry towards the fair sex. The familiarity and kindness which had long subsisted between the gentry and the peasantry, could not all at once be obliterated, and this connexion tended to sweeten rural life. In this state of innocence, ease, and tranquillity of mind, the love of poetry and music would still retain its ground, though it would naturally assume a form congenial to the more peaceful state of society. The minstrels, whose metrical tales used once to rouse the borderers, like the trumpet's sound, had been, by an order of the Legislature (1579), classed with rogues and vagabonds, and attempted to be suppressed. Knox and his disciples influenced the Scottish parliament, but contended in vain with her rural muse. Amidst our Arcadian vales, probably on the banks of the Tweed, or some of its tributary streams, one or more original geniuses may have arisen, who were destined to give a new turn to the taste of their countrymen. They would see that the events and pursuits which chequer private life were the proper subjects for popular poetry. Love, which had formerly held a divided sway with glory and ambition, became now the master-passion of the soul. To portray in lively and delicate colours, though with a hasty hand, the hopes and fears that agitate the breast of the love-sick swain, or forlorn maiden, afford ample scope to the rural poet. Love-songs, of which Tibullus himself would not have been ashamed, might be composed by an uneducated rustic with a slight tincture of letters; or if in these songs the character of the rustic be sometimes assumed, the truth of character, and the language of nature, are preserved. With unaffected simplicity and tenderness, topics are urged, most likely to soften the heart of a cruel and coy mistress, or to regain a fickle lover. Even in such as are of a melancholy cast, a ray of hope breaks through, and dispels the deep and settled gloom which characterizes the sweetest of the Highland *luinags*, or vocal airs. Nor are these songs all plaintive; many of them are lively and humourous, and some appear to us coarse and indelicate. They seem, however, genuine descriptions of the manners of an energetic and sequestered people in their hours of mirth and festivity, though in their portraits, some objects are brought into open view, which more fastidious painters would have thrown into shade."

"As those rural poets sung for amusement, not for gain, their effusions seldom exceeded a love-song, or a ballad of satire or humour, which, like the words of the elder minstrels, were seldom committed to writing, but treasured up in the memory of their friends and neighbours. Neither known to the learned nor patronized by the great, these rustic bards lived and died in obscurity; and by a strange fatality, their story, and even their very names have been forgotten. When proper models for pastoral songs were produced, there would be no want of imitators. To succeed in this

species of composition, soundness of understanding and sensibility of heart were more requisite than flights of imagination or pomp of numbers. Great changes have certainly taken place in Scottish song-writing, though we cannot trace the steps of this change; and few of the pieces admired in Queen Mary's time are now to be discovered in modern collections. It is possible, though not probable, that the music may have remained nearly the same, though the words to the tunes were entirely new-modelled."

These conjectures are highly ingenious. It cannot, however, be presumed, that the state of ease and tranquility described by Mr. Ramsay took place among the Scottish peasantry immediately on the union of the crowns, or indeed during the greater part of the seventeenth century. The Scottish nation, through all ranks, was deeply agitated by the civil wars, and the religious persecutions which succeeded each other in that disastrous period; it was not till after the revolution in 1688, and the subsequent establishment of their beloved form of church government, that the peasantry of the Lowlands enjoyed comparative repose; and it is since that period that a great number of the most admired Scottish songs have been produced, though the tunes to which they are sung, are, in general, of much greater antiquity. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the peace and security derived from the Revolution, and the Union, produced a favourable change on the rustic poetry of Scotland; and it will scarcely be doubted, that the institution of parish schools in 1696, by which a certain degree of instruction was diffused universally among the peasantry, contributed to this happy effect.

Soon after this appeared Allan Ramsay, the Scottish Theocritus. He was born on the high mountains that divides Clydesdale and Annandale, in a small hamlet by the banks of the Glengonar, a stream which descends into the Clyde. The ruins of this hamlet are still shown to the inquiring traveller. He was the son of a peasant, and probably received such instruction as his parish-school bestowed, and the poverty of his parents admitted. Ramsay made his appearance in Edinburgh, in the beginning of the present century, in the humble character of an apprentice to a barber; he was then fourteen or fifteen years of age. By degrees he acquired notice for his social disposition, and his talent for the composition of verses in the Scottish idiom; and, changing his profession for that of a bookseller, he became intimate with many of the literary, as well as the gay and fashionable characters of his time. Having published a volume of poems of his own in 1721, which was favourably received, he undertook to make a collection of ancient Scottish poems, under the title of the *Ever-Green*, and was afterwards encouraged to present to the world a collection of Scottish songs. "From what sources he procured them," says Ramsay of Ochtertyre, "whether from tradition or manuscript, is uncertain. As in the *Ever-Green* he made some rash attempts to improve on the originals of his ancient poems, he probably used still greater freedom with the songs and ballads. The truth cannot, however, be known on this point, till manuscripts of the songs printed by him, more ancient than the present century, shall be produced, or access be obtained to his own papers, if they are still in existence. To seve-

ral tunes which either wanted words, or had words that were improper or imperfect he or his friends adapted verses worthy of the melodies they accompanied, worthy indeed of the golden age. These verses were perfectly intelligible to every rustic, yet justly admired by persons of taste, who regarded them as the offspring of the pastoral muse. In some respects Ramsay had advantages not possessed by poets writing in the Scottish dialect in our days. Songs in the dialect of Cumberland or Lancashire, could never be popular, because these dialects have never been spoken by persons of fashion. But till the middle of the present century, every Scotsman, from the peer to the peasant, spoke a truly Doric language. It is true the English moralists and poets were by this time read by every person of condition, and considered as the standards for polite composition. But, as national prejudices were still strong, the busy, the learned, the gay, and the fair continued to speak their native dialect, and that with an elegance and poignancy of which Scotsmen of the present day can have no just notion. I am old enough to have conversed with Mr. Spittal, of Leuchat, a scholar and a man of fashion, who survived all the members of the Union Parliament, in which he had a seat. His pronunciation and phraseology differed as much from the common dialect, as the language of St. James's from that of Thames Street. Had we retained a court and parliament of our own, the tongues of the two sister kingdoms would indeed have differed like the Castilian and Portuguese; but each would have its own classics, not in a single branch, but in the whole circle of literature.

"Ramsay associated with the men of wit and fashion of his day, and several of them attempted to write poetry in his manner. Persons too idle or too dissipated to think of compositions that required much exertion, succeeded very happily in making tender sonnets to favourite tunes in compliment to their mistresses, and transforming themselves into impassioned shepherds, caught the language of the characters they assumed. Thus, about the year 1731, Robert Crawfurd of Auchinames, wrote the modern song of *Tweedside*, which has been so much admired. In 1743, Sir Gilbert Elliot, the first of our lawyers, who both spoke and wrote English elegantly, composed, in the character of a love-sick swain, a beautiful song, beginning, *My sheep I neglected, I lost my sheep hook*, on the marriage of his mistress, Miss Forbes, with Ronald Crawfurd. And about twelve years afterwards, the sister of Sir Gilbert wrote the *ancient* words to the tune of the *Flowers of the Forest*, and supposed to allude to the battle of Flodden. In spite of the double rhyme, it is a sweet, and though in some parts allegorical, a natural expression of national sorrow. The more *modern* words to the same tune, beginning, *I have seen the smiling of fortune beguiling*, were written long before by Mrs. Cockburn, a woman of great wit, who outlived all the first group of *literati* of the present century, all of whom were very fond of her. I was delighted with her company, though when I saw her, she was very old. Much did she know that is now lost."

In addition to these instances of Scottish songs, produced in the earlier part of the present century, may be mentioned the ballad of *Hardiknute*, by Lady Wardlaw; the ballad of *William and Marga-*

ret! and the song entitled the *Birks of Invermay*, by Mallet; the love-song, beginning, *For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove*, produced by the youthful muse of Thomson; and the exquisite pathetic ballad, *the Braes of Yarrow*, by Hamilton of Bangour. On the revival of letters in Scotland, subsequent to the Union, a very general taste seems to have prevailed for the national songs and music. "For many years," says Mr. Ramsay, "the singing of songs was the great delight of the higher and middle order of the people, as well as of the peasantry; and though a taste for Italian music has interfered with this amusement, it is still very prevalent. Between forty and fifty years ago, the common people were not only exceedingly fond of songs and ballads, but of metrical history. Often have I, in my cheerful morn of youth, listened to them with delight, when reading or reciting the exploits of Wallace and Bruce against the *Southrons*. Lord Hailes was wont to call Blind Harry their *Bible*, he being their great favourite next the Scriptures. When, therefore, one in the vale of life felt the first emotion of genius, he wanted not models *sui generis*. But though the seeds of poetry were scattered with a plentiful hand among the Scottish peasantry, the product was probably like pears and apples—of a thousand that sprung up, nine hundred and fifty are so bad as to set the teeth on edge; forty-five or more are passable and useful; and the rest of an exquisite flavour. Allan Ramsay and Burns are *wildings* of this last description. They had the example of the elder Scottish poets; they were not without the aid of the best English writers; and, what was of still more importance, they were no strangers to the book of nature, and to the book of God."

From this general view, it is apparent that Allan Ramsay may be considered as in a great measure the reviver of the rural poetry of his country. His collection of ancient Scottish poems under the name of *The Ever-Green*, his collection of Scottish songs, and his own poems, the principal of which is the *Gentle Shepherd*, have been universally read among the peasantry of his country, and have in some degree superseded the adventures of Bruce and Wallace, as recorded by Barbour and Blind Harry. Burns was well acquainted with all of these. He had also before him the poems of Fergusson in the Scottish dialect, which have been produced in our own times, and of which it will be necessary to give a short account.

Fergusson was born of parents who had it in their power to procure him a liberal education, a circumstance, however, which in Scotland, implies no very high rank in society. From a well written and apparently authentic account of his life, we learn that he spent six years at the schools of Edinburgh and Dundee, and several years at the universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrew's. It appears that he was at one time destined for the Scottish church; but as he advanced towards manhood, he renounced that intention, and at Edinburgh entered the office of a writer to the signet, a title which designates and separates a higher order of Scottish attornies. Fergusson had sensibility of mind, a warm and generous heart, and talents for society, of the most attractive kind. To such a man no situation could be more dangerous than that in which he was placed. The excesses into which he was led, impaired his feeble constitution, and he sunk under them in the month of October

1774, in his 23d or 24th year. Burns was not acquainted with the poems of this youthful genius when he himself began to write poetry; and when he first saw them, he had renounced the muses. But while he resided in the town of Irvine, meeting with *Fergusson's Scottish Poems*, he informs us that he "strung his lyre anew with emulating vigour." Touched by the sympathy originating in kindred genius, and in the forebodings of similar fortune, Burns regarded Fergusson with a partial and an affectionate admiration. Over his grave he erected a monument, as has already been mentioned; and his poems he has in several instances, made the subjects of his imitation.

From this account of the Scottish poems known to Burns, those who are acquainted with them will see they are chiefly humourous or pathetic; and under one or other of these descriptions most of his own poems will class. Let us compare him with his predecessors under each of these points of view, and close our examination with a few general observations.

It has frequently been observed, that Scotland has produced comparatively speaking, few writers who have excelled in humour. But this observation is true only when applied to those who have continued to reside in their own country, and have confined themselves to composition in pure English; and in these circumstances it admits of an easy explanation. The Scottish poets, who have written in the dialect of Scotland, have been at all times remarkable for dwelling on subjects of humour, in which indeed some of them have excelled. It would be easy to show, that the dialect of Scotland having become provincial, is now scarcely suited to the more elevated kinds of poetry. If we may believe that the poem of *Christis Kirk of the Grene* was written by James the First of Scotland, this accomplished monarch, who had received an English education under Henry the Fourth, and who bore arms under his gallant successor, gave the model on which the greater part of the humorous productions of the rustic muse of Scotland had been formed. *Christis Kirk of the Grene* was reprinted by Ramsay, somewhat modernized in the orthography, and two cantos were added by him, in which he attempts to carry on the design. Hence the poem of King James is usually printed in Ramsay's works. The royal bard describes, in the first canto, a rustic dance, and afterwards a contention in archery, ending in an affray. Ramsay relates the restoration of concord, and the renewal of the rural sports with the humours of a country wedding. Though each of the poets describes the manners of his respective age, yet in the whole piece there is a very sufficient uniformity; a striking proof of the identity of character in the Scottish peasantry at the two periods, distant from each other three hundred years. It is an honourable distinction to this body of men, that their character and manners, very little embellished, have been found to be susceptible of an amusing and interesting species of poetry: and it must appear not a little curious that the single nation of modern Europe which possesses an original poetry, should have received the model, followed by their rustic bards, from the monarch on the throne,

The two additional cantos to *Christis Kirk of the Grene*, written

by Ramsay, though objectionable in point of delicacy, are among the happiest of his productions. His chief excellence indeed, lay in the description of rural characters, incidents, and scenery; for he did not possess any very high powers either of imagination or of understanding. He was well acquainted with the peasantry of Scotland, their lives and opinions. The subject was in a great measure new; his talents were equal to the subject, and he has shown that it may be happily adapted to pastoral poetry. In his *Gentle Shepherd*, the characters are delineations from nature, the descriptive parts are in the genuine style of beautiful simplicity, the passions and affections of rural life are finely portrayed, and the heart is pleasingly interested in the happiness that is bestowed on innocence and virtue. Throughout the whole there is an air of reality which the most careless reader cannot but perceive; and in fact no poem ever perhaps acquired so high a reputation, in which truth received so little embellishment from the imagination. In pastoral songs, and his rural tales, Ramsay appears to less advantage, indeed, but still with considerable attraction. The story of the *Monk and the Miller's Wife*, though somewhat licentious, may rank with the happiest productions of Prior or La Fontaine. But when he attempts subjects from higher life, and aims at pure English composition, he is feeble and uninteresting, and seldom ever reaches mediocrity. Neither are his familiar epistles and elegies in the Scottish dialect entitled to much approbation. Though Fergusson had higher powers of imagination than Ramsay, his genius was not of the highest order; nor did his learning, which was considerable, improve his genius. His poems written in pure English, in which he often follows classical models, though superior to the English poems of Ramsay, seldom rise above mediocrity; but in those composed in the Scottish dialect he is often very successful. He was, in general, however, less happy than Ramsay in the subjects of his muse. As he spent the greater part of his life in Edinburgh, and wrote for his amusement in the intervals of business or dissipation, his Scottish poems are chiefly founded on the incidents of a town life, which, though they are not susceptible of humour, do not admit of those delineations of scenery and manners, which vivify the rural poetry of Ramsay, and which so agreeably amuse the fancy and interest the heart. The town eclogues of Fergusson, if we may so denominate them, are however faithful to nature, and often distinguished by a very happy vein of humour. His poems entitled *The Daft Days*, *The King's Birth day in Edinburgh*, *Leith Races*, and *The Hallow Fair*, will justify this character. In these, particularly in the last, he imitated *Christis Kirk of the Grene*, as Ramsay had done before him. His *Address to the Tron-kirk Bell* is an exquisite piece of humour, which Burns has scarcely excelled. In appreciating the genius of Fergusson, it ought to be recollected, that his poems are the careless effusions of an irregular though aimable young man, who wrote for the periodical papers of the day, and who died in early youth. Had his life been prolonged under happier circumstances of fortune, he would probably have risen to much higher reputation. He might have excelled in rural poetry, for though his professed pastorals on the established Sicilian model, are stale and uninteresting, *The Far-*

mer's Ingle, which may be considered as a Scottish pastoral, is the happiest of all his productions, and certainly was the archetype of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*. Fergusson, and more especially Burns, have shown, that the character and manners of the peasantry of Scotland, of the present times, are as well adapted to poetry, as in the days of Ramsay, or of the author of *Christis Kirk of the Grene*.

The humour of Burns is of a richer vein than that of Ramsay or Fergusson, both of whom, as he himself informs us, he had frequently in his eye, but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than to servile imitation." His descriptive powers, whether the objects on which they are employed be comic or serious, animate, or inanimate, are of the highest order.—A superiority of this kind is essential to every species of poetical excellence. In one of his earlier poems his plan seems to be to inculcate a lesson of contentment on the lower classes of society, by showing that their superiors are neither much better nor happier than themselves; and this he chooses to execute in the form of a dialogue between two dogs. He introduces this dialogue by an account of the persons and characters of the speakers. The first, whom he has named *Cæsar*, is a dog of condition:

> 'His locked, letter'd, braw brass-collar,
> Showed him the gentleman and scholar.'

High-bred though he is, he is however full of condescension:

> 'At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
> Nae tawted tyke, tho' e'er sae duddie,
> But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
> An stroan't on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.'

The other *Luath*, is a "ploughman's collie, but a cur of a good heart and a sound understanding.

> 'His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,
> Aye gat him friends in ilka place;
> His breast was white, his towsie back
> Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
> His gawcie tail, wi' upward curl,
> Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl.'

Never were *twa dogs* so exquisitely delineated. Their gambols, before they sit down to moralize, are described with an equal degree of happiness; and through the whole dialogue, the character, as well as the different condition of the two speakers, is kept in view. The speech of *Luath*, in which he enumerates the comforts of the poor, gives the following account of their merriment on the first day of the year:

> 'That merry day the year begins,
> They bar the door on frosty winds:
> The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
> And sheds a heart-inspirin' steam:
> The luntin pipe, and sneeshin' mill,
> Are handed round wi' right guid-will;
> The canty auld folks crackin' crouse,
> The young anes rantin thro' the house—
> My heart has been sae fain to see them,
> That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.'

Of all the animals who have moralized on human affairs since the days of Æsop, the dog seems best entitled to the privilege, as well from his superior sagacity, as from his being, more

than any other, the friend and associate of man. The dogs of Burns, excepting in their talent for moralizing, are downright dogs; and not like the horses of Swift, or the *Hind and Panther* of Dryden, men in the shape of brutes. It is this circumstance that heightens the humour of the dialogue. The "twa dogs;" are constantly kept before our eyes, and the contrast between their form and character as dogs, and the sagacity of their conversation, heightens the humour, and deepens the impression of the poet's satire. Though in this poem the chief excellence may be considered as humour, yet great talents are displayed in its composition; the happiest powers of description and the deepest insight into the human heart. It is seldom, however, that the humour of Burns appears in so simple a form. The liveliness of his sensibility frequently impels him to introduce into subjects of humour, emotions of tenderness or of pity; and, where occasion admits, he is sometimes carried on to exert the higher powers of imagination. In such instances he leaves the society of Ramsay and of Fergusson, and associates himself with the masters of English poetry, whose language he frequently assumes.

Of the union of tenderness and humour, examples may be found in *The Death and Dying Words of poor Mailie*, in *The auld Farmer's New-Year's Morning Salutation to his Mare Maggie*, and in many other of his poems. The praise of whisky is a favourite subject with Burns. To this he dedicates his poem of *Scotch Drink*. After mentioning its cheering influence in a variety of situations, he describes, with singular liveliness and power of fancy, its stimulating effects on the blacksmith working at his forge:

'Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owre hip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong fore-hammer,
Till block an' studdie ring and reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.'

On another occasion, choosing to exalt whisky above wine, he introduces a comparison between the natives of more genial climes, to whom the vine furnishes their beverage, and his own countrymen who drink the spirit of malt. The description of the Scotsman is humorous:

'But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there's the foe;
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.'

Here the notion of danger rouses the imagination of the poet. He goes on thus:

'Nae cauld faint hearted doubtings teaze him;
Death comes—wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him,
And when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathing lea'es him
In faint huzzas.'

Again, however, he sinks into humour, and concludes the poem with the following most laughable, but most irreverent apostrophe:

"Scotland, my auld, respected mither!!
Though whyles ye moistify your leather,
'Till where you sit, on craps o' heather,
Ye tine your dam;
Freedom and Whisky gang thegither,
Tak' aff your dram!"

Of this union of humour, with the higher powers of imagination, instances may be found in the poem entitled *Death and Dr. Hornbook*, and in almost every stanza of the *Address to the Deil*, one of the happiest of his productions. After reproaching this terrible being with all his "doings" and misdeeds, in the course of which he passes through a series of Scottish superstitions, and rises at times into a high strain of poetry; he concludes this address, delivered in a tone of great familiarity, not altogether unmixed with apprehension, in the following words:

"But, fare ye weel, auld Nickie ben
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye ablins might—I dinna ken—
Still ha'e a stake—
I'm wane to think upo' yon den
E'en for your sake."

Humour and tenderness are here so happily intermixed, that it is impossible to say which preponderates.

Fergussion wrote a dialogue between the *Causeway* and the *Plainstones* of Edinburgh. This probably suggested to Burns his dialogue between the Old and New Bridge over the river Ayr. The nature of such subjects requires that they shall be treated humorously, and Fergusson has attempted nothing beyond this. Though the *Causeway* and the *Plainstones* talk together, no attempt is made to personify the speakers. A "cadie" heard the conversation, and reported it to the poet.

In the dialogue between the *Brigs of Ayr*, Burns himself is the auditor, and the time and occasion on which it occurred is related with great circumstantiality. The poet, "press'd by care," or "inspired by whim," had left his bed in the town of Ayr, and wandered out alone in the darkness and solitude of a winter night, to the mouth of the river, where the stillness was interrupted only by the rushing sound of the influx of the tide. It was after midnight. The Dungeon-clock had struck two, and the sound had been repeated by Wallace-Tower. All else was hushed. The moon shone brightly, and

"The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept, gently, crusting, o'er the glittering stream."

In this situation, the listening bard hears the "clanging sugh" of wings moving through the air, and speedily he perceives two beings, reared, the one on the Old, the other on the New Bridge, whose form and attire he describes, and whose conversation with each other he rehearses. These genii enter into a comparison of the respective edifices over which they preside, and afterwards, as is usual between the old and young, compare modern characters and manners with those of past times. They differ, as may be expected, and taunt and scold each other in broad Scotch. This conversation, which is certainly humorous, may be considered as a proper business of the poem. As the debate runs high, and threa-

tens serious consequences, all at once it is interrupted by a new scene of wonders:

> ——— ——— ———'all before their sight
> A fairy train appear'd in order bright;
> Adown the glittering stream they featly danced;
> Bright to the moon their various dresses glanced;
> They footed o'er the watry glass so neat,
> The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet;
> While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,
> And soul-ennobled Bards heroic ditties sung.'
> . . . . . .
> 'The Genius of the Stream in front appears,
> A venerable chief, advanced in years;
> His hoary head with water-lilies crown'd,
> His manly leg with garter tangle bound.'

Next follow a number of other allegorical beings, among whom are the four seasons, Rural Joy, Plenty, Hospitality, and Courage.

> 'Benevolence, with mild benignant air,
> A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair:
> Learning and Worth in equal measures trode,
> From simple Catrine, their long-loved abode:
> Last, white-robed Peace, crown'd with a hazel wreath,
> To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
> The broken iron instrument of Death;
> At sight of whom our Sprites forgat their kindling wrath."

This poem, irregular and imperfect as it is, displays various and powerful talents, and may serve to illustrate the genius of Burns. In particular, in affords a striking instance of his being carried beyond his original purpose by the powers of imagination.

In Fergusson's poem, the *Plainstones* and *Causeway* contrast the characters of the different persons who walked upon them. Burns probably conceived, that, by a dialogue between the Old and New Bridge, he might form a humorous contrast between ancient and modern manners in the town of Ayr. Such a dialogue could only be supposed to pass in the stillness of night; and this led our poet into a description of a midnight scene, which excited in a high degree the powers of his imagination. During the whole dialogue the scenery is present to his fancy, and it at length suggests to him a fairy dance of aerial beings, under the beams of the moon, by which the wrath of the Genii of the *Brigs of Ayr* is appeased.

Incongruous as the different parts of this poem are, it is not an incongruity that displeases; and we have only to regret that the poet did not bestow a little pains in making the figures more correct, and in smoothing the versification.

The epistles of Burns, in which may be included his *Dedication to G. H., Esq.*, discover, like his other writings, the powers of a superior understanding. They display deep insight into human nature, a gay and happy strain of reflection, great independence of sentiment, and generosity of heart. It is to be regretted, that in his *Holy Fair*, and in some of his other poems, his humour degenerates into personal satire, and is not sufficiently guarded in other respects. The *Halloween* of Burns is free from every objection of this sort. It is interesting not only from its humorous description of manners, but as it records the spells and charms used on the celebration of a festival, now, even in Scotland, falling into neglect,

but which was once observed over the greater part of Britain and Ireland. These charms are supposed to afford an insight into futurity, especially on the subject of marriage, the most interesting event of rural life. In the *Halloween*, a female, in performing one of the spells, has occasion to go out by moonlight to dip her shift sleeve into a stream *running towards the South*. It was not necessary to Burns to give a description of this stream, but it was the character of his ardent mind to pour forth not merely what the occasion required, but what it admitted; and the temptation to describe so beautiful a natural object by moonlight, was not to be resisted—

'Whyles owre a lynn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round the rocky scar it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Beneath the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.

Those who understand the Scottish dialect will allow this to be one of the finest instances of description which the records of poetry afford.—Though of a very different nature, it may be compared, in point of excellence, with Thomson's description of a river swollen by the rains of winter, bursting through the streights that confine its torrent, "boiling, wheeling, foaming, and thundering along."

In pastoral, or, to speak more correctly, in rural poetry of a serious nature, Burns excelled equally as in that of a humorous kind, and, using less of the Scottish dialect in his serious poems, he becomes more generally intelligible. It is difficult to decide whether the *Address to a Mouse whose nest was turned up with the plough*, should be considered as serious or comic. Be this as it may, the poem is one of the happiest and most finished of his productions. If we smile at the "bickering brattle" of the little flying animal, it is a smile of tenderness and pity. The descriptive part is admirable: the moral reflections beautiful, and arising directly out of the occasion; and in the conclusion there is a deep melancholy, a sentiment of doubt and dread, that arises to the sublime. The *Address to a Mountain Daisy turned down with the plough*, is a poem of the same nature, though somewhat inferior in point of originality, as well as in the interest produced. To extract out of interests so common, and seemingly so trivial as these, so fine a train of sentiment and imagery, is the surest proof, as well as the most brilliant triumph, of original genius. The *Vision*, in two cantos, from which a beautiful extract is taken by Mr. Mackenzie, in the 97th number of the *Lounger*, is a poem of great and various excellence. The opening, in which the poet describes his own state of mind, retiring in the evening, wearied from the labours of the day, to moralize on his conduct and prospects, is truly interesting. The chamber, if we may so term it, in which he sits down to muse, is an exquisite painting:

'There, lanely by the ingle cheek,
I sat, and eyed the spewing reek,

That filled wi' hoast provoking smeek
That auld clay biggin;
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.'

To reconcile to our imagination the entrance of an aerial being into a mansion of this kind, required the powers of Burns—he, however succeeds. Coila enters, and her countenance, attitude, and gestures, unlike those of other spiritual beings, are distinctly portrayed. To the painting on her mantle, on which is depicted the most striking scenery, as well as the most distinguished characters of his native country, some exceptions may be made. The mantle of Coila, like the cup of Thyrsis, and the shield of Achilles, is too much crowded with figures, and some of the objects represented upon it are scarcely admissable, according to the principles of design. The generous temperament of Burns led him into these exuberances. In his second edition he enlarged the number of figures originally introduced, that he might include objects to which he was originally attached by sentiments of affection, gratitude, or patriotism. The second *Duan*, or canto of this poem, in which Coila describes her own nature and occupations, particularly her superintendence of his infant genius, and in which she reconciles him to the character of a bard, is an elevated and solemn strain of poetry, ranking in all respects, excepting the harmony of numbers, with the higher productions of the English muse. The concluding stanza, compared with that already quoted, will show to what a height Burns rises in this poem, from the point at which he set out:—

'And wear thou this!'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head;
The polish'd leaves and berries red,
Did rustling play,
And, like a passing thought she fled
In light away.'

In various poems Burns has exhibited the picture of a mind under the deep impressions of real sorrow. *The Lament*, the *Ode to Ruin*, *Despondency*, and *Winter, a Dirge*, are of this character. In the first of these poems the eighth stanza, which describes a sleepless night from anguish of mind, is particularly striking. Burns often indulged in those melancholy views of the nature and condition of man, which are so congenial to the temperament of sensibility. The poem entitled *Man was made to Mourn*, affords an instance of this kind, and *The Winter Night* is of the same description. The last is highly characteristic, both of the temper of mind, and of the condition of Burns. It begins with a description of a dreadful storm on a night in winter. The poet represents himself as lying in bed, and listening to its howling. In this situation, he naturally turns his thoughts to the *ourie** *Cattle*, and the *silly*† *sheep*, exposed to all the violence of the tempest. Having lamented their fate, he proceeds in the following:

'Ilk happing bird—wee helpless thing!
That in the merry months of spring,

* Ourie, out lying. Ourie Cattle, Cattle that are unhoused all winter.
† Silly is in this, as in other places, a term of compassion and endearment.

Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e!'

Other reflections of the same nature occur to his mind; and as the midnight moon, "muffled with clouds," casts her dreary light on his window, thoughts of a darker and more melancholy nature crowd upon him. In this state of mind, he hears a voice pouring through the gloom, a solemn and plaintive strain of reflection. The mourner compares the fury of the elements with that of man to his brother man, and finds the former light in the balance,

"See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder, o'er the land."

He pursues this train of reflection through a variety of particulars, in the course of which he introduces the following animated apostrophe:

O ye! who sink in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfy'd keen Nature's clam'rous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays him down to sleep,
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drifty heap."

The strain of sentiment which runs through this poem is noble, though the execution is unequal, and the versification is defective.

Among the serious poems of Burns, *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is perhaps entitled to the first rank. *The Farmer's Ingle* of Fergusson evidently suggested the plan of this poem, as has been already mentioned; but after the plan was formed, Burns trusted entirely to his own powers for the execution. Fergusson's poem is certainly very beautiful. It has all the charms which depend on rural characters and manners happily portrayed, and exhibited under circumstances highly grateful to the imagination. *The Farmer's Ingle* begins with describing the return of evening. The toils of the day are over, and the farmer retires to his comfortable fire-side. The reception which he and his men-servants receive from the careful house-wife, is pleasingly described. After their supper is over, they begin to talk on the rural events of the day.

"'Bout kirk and market eke their tales gae on,
How Jock woo'd Jenny here to be his bride;
And there how Marion for a bastard son,
Upon the cutty stool was forced to ride,
The waefu' scauld o' our Mess John to bide.

The "Guidame" is next introduced as forming a circle round the fire, in the midst of her grand-children, and while she spins from the rock, and the spindle plays on her "russet lap," she is relating to the young ones tales of witches and ghosts. The poet exclaims,

"O mock na this my friends! but rather mourn,
Ye in life's brawest spring wi' reason clear,
Wi' eild our idle fancies a' return,
And dim our dolefu' days wi' bairnly fear;
The mind's aye cradl'd when the grave is near."

In the meantime the farmer, wearied with the fatigues of the day, stretches himself at length on the *settle*, a sort of rustic couch, which extends on one side of the fire, and the cat and house-dog leap upon it to receive his caresses. Here, resting at his ease, he gives his directions to his men-servants for the succeeding day. The house-wife follows his example, and gives her orders to the maidens. By degrees the oil in the cruise begins to fail; the fire runs low; sleep steals on his rustic group; and they move off to enjoy their peaceful slumbers. The poet concludes by bestowing his blessing on the "husbandman and all his tribe."

This is an original and truly interesting pastoral. It posseses every thing required in this species of composition. We might have perhaps said, every thing that it admits, had not Burn's written his *Cotter's Saturday Night.*

The cottager returning from his labours, has no servants to accompany him, to partake of his fare, or to receive his instructions. The circle which he joins, is composed of his wife and children only; and if it admits of less variety, it affords an opportunity for representing scenes that more strongly interest the affections. The younger children running to meet him, and clambering round his knee; the elder, returning from their weekly labours with the neighbouring farmers, dutifully depositing their little gains with their parents, and receiving their fathers blessing and instructions; the incidents of the courtship of Jenny, their eldest daughter, "woman grown," are circumstances of the most interesting kind, which are most happy delineated; and after their frugal supper, the representation of these humble cottagers forming a wider circle round their hearth, and uniting in the worship of God is a picture the most deeply affecting of any which the rural muse had ever presented to the view. Burns was admirably adapted to this delineation. Like all men of genius he was of the temperament of devotion, and the powers of memory co-operated in this instance with the sensibility of his heart, and the fervour of his imagination. *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is tender and moral, it is solemn and devotional, and rises at length in a strain of grandeur and sublimity, which modern poetry has not surpassed. The noble sentiments of patriotism with which it concludes, correspond with the rest of the poem. In no age or country have the pastoral muses breathed such elevated accents, if the Messiah of Pope be excepted, which is indeed a pastoral in form only. It is to be regretted that Burns did not employ his genius on other subjects of the same nature, which the manners and customs of the Scottish peasantry would have amply supplied. Such poetry is not to be estimated by the degree of pleasure which it bestows; it sinks deeply into the heart, and is calculated far beyond any other human means, for giving permanence to to the scenes and the characters it so exquisitely describes.*

* A great number of manuscript poems were found among the papers of Burns, addressed to him by admirers of his genius, from different parts of Britain, as well as from Ireland and America. Among these was a poetical epistle from Mr. Telford, of Shrewsbury, of superior merit. It was written in the dialect of Scotland (of which country Mr. Telford is a native,) and in the versification generally employed by our poet himself. Its object is to recommend to him other subjects of a serious nature similar to that of the "Cotter's Saturday Night;" and the reader will find that the advice is happily enforced by example. It would have given the editor pleasure to have inserted the whole of his poem, which he hopes will one

Before we conclude, it will be proper to offer a few observations on the lyric productions of Burns. His compositions of this kind are chiefly songs, generally in the Scottish dialect, and always after the model of the Scottish songs, on the general character and moral influence of which, some observations have already been offered. We may hazard a few more peculiar remarks.

day see the light; he is happy to have obtained, in the mean time, his friend Mr. Telford's permission to insert the following extract:

. . . . . .

Pursue, O Burns, thy happy style,
" Those manner-painting strains," that while
They bear me northward many a mile,
Recal the days,
When tender joys, with pleasing smile,
Blest my young ways.

I see my fond companions rise,
I join the happy village joys,
I see our green hills touch the skies,
And thro' the woods,
I hear the river's rushing noise,
Its roaring floods*

No distant Swiss with warmer glow,
E'er heard his native music flow,
Nor could his wishes stronger grow,
Than still have mine
When up this ancient mount† I go,
With songs of thine.

O happy Bard! thy gen'rous flame,
Was given to raise thy country's fame,
For this thy charming numbers came,
Thy matchless lays;
Then sing and save her virtuous name,
To latest days.

. . . . . .

But mony a theme awaits thy muse,
Fine as thy cotter's sacred views,
Then in such verse thy soul infuse,
With holy air,
And sing the course the pious choose,
With all thy care.

How with religious awe imprest,
They open lay the guiltless breast,
And youth and age with fears distrest,
All due prepare,
The symbols of eternal rest
Devout to share§.

How down ilk lang withdrawing hill,
Successive crowds the valleys fill,
While pure religious converse still
Beguiles the way,
And gives a cast to youthful will,
To suit the day.

How placed along the sacred board,
Their hoary pastor's looks adored,
His voice with peace and blessing stored,
Sent from above;
And faith, and hope, and joy afford,
And boundless love.

O'er this, with warm seraphic glow,
Celestial beings, pleased, bow,
And, whispered, hear the holy vow,
'Mid grateful tears;
And mark amid such scenes below,
Their future peers.

. . . . . .

O mark the awful solemn scene!*
When hoary winter clothes the plain,
Along the snowy hills is seen
Approaching slow,
In mourning weeds, the village train,
In silent woe.

Some much-respected brother's bier,
(By turns in pious task they share)
With heavy hearts they forward bear
Along the path;
Where nei'bours saw, in dusky air,†
The light of death.

And when they pass the rocky howe,
Where binwood bushes o'er them flow,
And move around the rising knowe,
Where far away
The kirkyard trees are seen to grow,
By th' water brae.

Assembled round the narrow grave,
While o'er them wintry tempests rave,
In the cold wind their grey locks wave,
As low they lay
Their brother's body 'mongst the lave
Of parent clay.

Expressive looks from each declare
The griefs within, their bosoms bear,
One holy bow devout they share,
Then home return,
And think o'er all the virtues fair,
Of him they mourn.

. . . . . .

Say how by early lessons taught,
(Truth's pleasing air is willing caught)
Congenial to th' untainted thought,
The shepherd boy,
Who tends his flocks on lonely height,
Feels holy joy.

*The banks of the Esk in Dumfriesshire, are here alluded to.

†A beautiful little mount which stands immediately before, or rather forms a part of Shrewsbury castle, a seat of Sir William Pulteney, Bart.

§The Sacrament, generally administered in the country parishes of Scotland in the open air.

* A Scottish funeral.

† This alludes to a superstition prevalent in Eskdale, and Annandale, that a light precedes in the night every funeral, marking the precise path it is to pass.

Of the historic or heroic ballads of Scotland it is unnecessary to speak. Burns has no where imitated them, a circumstance to be regretted, since in this species of composition, from its admitting the more terrible, as well as the softer graces of poetry, he was eminently qualified to have excelled. The Scottish songs which served as a model to Burns, are almost without exception pastoral, or rather rural. Such of them as are comic, frequently treat of a rustic courtship, or a country wedding: or they describe the differences of opinion which arise in married life. Burns has imitated this species, and surpassed his models. The song beginning, "Husband, husband, cease your strife," may be cited in support of this observation. His other comic songs are of equal merit. In the rural songs of Scotland, whether humorous or tender, the sentiments are given to particular characters, and very generally, the incidents are referred to particular scenery. This last circumstance may be considered as a distinguishing feature of Scottish songs, and on it a considerable part of their attraction depends. On all occasions the sentiments, of whatever nature, are delivered in the character of the persons principally interested. If love be described, it is not as

Is aught on earth so lovely known,
On Sabbath morn, and far alone,
His guileless soul all naked shown
Before his God—
Such pray'rs must welcome reach the throne,
And blest abode.

O tell! with what a heartfelt joy,
The parent eyes the virtuous boy;
And all his constant, kind employ
Is how to give
The best of lear he can enjoy,
As means to live.

The parish-school, its curious site,
The master who can clear indite,
And lead him on to count and write,
Demand thy care;
Nor pass the ploughman's school at night
Without a share.

Nor yet the tenty curious lad,
Who o'er the ingle hings his head,
And begs o' nei'bours books to read;
For hence arise
Thy country's sons, who far are spread,
Baith bauld and wise.

. . . . . .

The bonny lasses as they spin
Perhaps wi' Allan's sangs begin,
How Tay and Tweed smooth flowing rin
Thro' flowery hows;
Where Shepherd-lads their sweethearts win
With earnest vows.

Or may be, Burns, thy thrilling page
May a' their virtuous thoughts engage,
While playful youth and placid age
In concert join,
To bless the bard, who, gay or sage,
Improves the mind.

. . . . . .

Long may their harmless, simple ways,
Nature's own pure emotions raise:
May still the dear romantic blaze
Of purest love,
Their bosoms warm to latest days,
And aye improve.

May still each fond attachment glow,
O'er woods, o'er streams, o'er hills of snow:
May ruggid rocks still dearer grow,
And may their souls
Even love the warlock glens which through
The tempest howls.

To eternize such themes as these,
And all their happy manners seize,
Will every virtuous bosom please,
And high in fame
To future times will justly raise
Thy patriot name.

While all the venal tribes decay,
That bask in flattery's flaunting ray,
The noisome vermin of a day,
Thy works shall gain
O'er every mind a boundless sway,
And lasting reign.

When winter binds the harden'd plains,
Around each hearth, the hoary swains
Shall teach the rising youth thy strains,
And anxious say,
Our blessing with our sons remains,
And Burns's Lay!

it is observed, but as it is felt; and the passion is delineated under a particular aspect. Neither is it the fiercer impulses of desire that are expressed, as in the celebrated ode to Sappho, the model of so many modern songs; but those gentler emotions of tenderness and affection, which do not entirely absorb the lover, but permit him to associate his emotions with the charms of external nature, and breathe the accents of purity and innocence, as well as of love. In these respects the love-songs of Scotland are honourably distinguished from the most admired classical compositions of the same kind; and by such associations, a variety as well as liveliness, is given to the representation of this passion, which are not to be found in the poetry of Greece and Rome, or perhaps of any other nation. Many of the love-songs of Scotland describe scenes of rural courtship; many may be considered as invocations from their lovers to their mistresses. On such occasions a degree of interest and reality is given to the sentiment, by the spot destined to these happy interviews being particularized. The lovers perhaps meet at the *Bush aboon Traquair*, or on the *Banks of Ettrick;* the nymphs are invoked to wander among the wilds of *Roslin*, or *the woods of Invermay*, nor is the spot merely pointed out; the scenery is often described as well as the character, so as to represent a complete picture to the fancy. Thus the maxim of Horace, *ut pictura poesis*, is faithfully observed by these rustic bards, who are guided by the same impulse of nature and sensibility which influenced the father of epic poetry, on whose example the precept of the Roman poet was perhaps founded. By this means the imagination is employed to interest the feelings. When we do not conceive distinctly, we do not sympathize deeply in any human affection; and we conceive nothing in the abstract. Abstraction, so useful in morals and so essential in science, must be abandoned when the heart is to be subdued by the powers of poetry or of eloquence. The bards of a ruder condition of society paint individual objects; and hence, among other causes, the easy access they obtain to the heart. Generalization is the vice of poets, whose learning overpowers their genius; of poets of a refined and scientific age. The dramatic style which prevails so much in the Scottish songs, while it contributes greatly to the interest they excite, also shows that they have originated among people in the earlier stages of society. Where this form of composition appears in songs of a modern date, it indicates that they have been written after the ancient model.

The Scottish songs are of very unequal poetical merit, and this inequality often extends to the different parts of the same song. Those that are humorous, or characteristic of manners, have in general the merit of copying nature; those that are serious are tender and often sweetly interesting, but seldom exhibit high powers of imagination, which indeed do not easily find a place in this species of composition. The alliance of the words of the Scottish songs with the music has in some instances given to the former a popularity, which otherwise they would never have obtained.

The association of words and the music of these songs with the more beautiful parts of the scenery of Scotland, contributes to the same effect. It has given them not merely popularity, but permanance; it

has imparted to the works of man some portion of the durability of the works of nature. If, from our imperfect experience of the past we may judge with any confidence respecting the future, songs of this description are of all others the least likely to die. In the changes of language they may no doubt suffer change; but the associated strain of sentiment and of music will perhaps survive, while the clear stream sweeps down the vale of Yarrow, or the yellow broom waves on the Cowden-knowes.

The first attempts of Burns in song-writing were not very successful. His habitual inattention to the exactness of rhymes, and to the harmony of numbers, arising probably from the models on which his versification was formed, were faults likely to appear to more advantage in this species of composition, than in any other; and we may also remark, that the strength of his imagination, and exuberance of his sensibility, were with difficulty restrained within the limits of gentleness, delicacy and tenderness, which seem to be assigned to the love-songs of his nation. Burns was better adapted by nature for following in such composition the model of the Grecian than of the Scottish muse. By study and practice he however surmounted all these obstacles. In his earlier songs there is some ruggedness; but this gradually disappears in his successive efforts; and some of his later compositions of this kind may be compared, in polished delicacy, with the finest songs in our language, while in the eloquence of sensibility they surpass them all.

The songs of Burns, like the models he followed and excelled, are often dramatic, and for the greater part amatory: and the beauties of rural nature are everywhere associated with the passions and emotions of the mind. Disdaining to copy the works of others, he has not, like some poets of great name, admitted into his descriptions exotic imagery. The landscapes he has painted, and the objects with which they are embelished, are, in every single instance, such as are to be found in his own country. In a mountainous region, especially when it is comparatively rude and naked, the most beautiful scenery will always be found in the valleys, and on the banks of the wooded streams. Such scenery is peculiarly interesting at the close of a summer day. As we advance northwards, the number of the days of summer, indeed diminishes; but from this cause, as well as from the mildness of the temperature, the attraction increases, and the summer night becomes still more beautiful. The greater obliquity of the sun's path in the ecliptic, prolongs the grateful season of twilight to the midnight hours, and the shades of the evening seem to mingle with the morning's dawn.

The rural poets of Scotland, as may be expected, associate in their songs the expression of passion, with the most beautiful of their scenery, in the fairest season of the year, and generally in those hours of the evening when the beauties of nature are most interesting.

To all these adventitious circumstances, on which so much of the effect of poetry depends, great attention is paid by Burns. There is scarcely a single song of his in which particular scenery is not described, or allusions made to natural objects, remarkable for beauty or interest; and though his descriptions are not so full as are sometimes met with in the older Scottish songs, they are in the

highest degree appropriate and interesting. Instances in proof of this might be quoted from the *Lea Rig, Highland Mary,* the *Soldier's Return, Logan Water,* from that beautiful pastoral, *Bonnie Jean,* and a great number of others. Occasionally the force of his genius carries him beyond the usual boundaries of Scottish song, and the natural objects introduced have more of the character of sublimity. An instance of this kind is noticed by Mr. Syme, and many others might be adduced.

> "Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
> Where the winds howl to the wave's dashing roar;
> There would I weep my woes,
> There seek my last repose,
> Till grief my eyes should close,
> Ne'er to wake more."

In one song, the scene of which is laid in a winter night, the "wan moon" is described as "setting behind the white waves;" in another, the "storms" are apostrophized, and commanded to "rest in the cave of their slumbers." On several occasions, the genius of Burns loses sight entirely of his archetypes, and rises into a strain of uniform sublimity. Instances of this kind appear in *Liberty, a Vision,* and in his two war-songs, *Bruce to his troops,* and the *Song of Death.* These last are of a description of which we have no other in our language. The martial songs of our nation are not military, but naval. If we were to seek a comparison of these songs of Burns with others of a similar nature, we must have recourse to the poetry of ancient Greece, or of modern Gaul.

Burns has made an important addition to the songs of Scotland. In his compositions, the poetry equals and sometimes surpasses the music. He has enlarged the poetical scenery of his country. Many of her rivers and mountains, formerly unknown to the muse, are now consecrated by his immortal verse. The Doon, the Lugar, the Ayr, the Nith, and the Cluden, will in future, like the Yarrow, the Tweed, and the Tay, be considered as classic streams, and their borders will be trod with new and superior emotions.

The greater part of the songs of Burns were written after he removed into the county of Dumfries. Influenced, perhaps, by habits formed in early life, he usually composed while walking in the open air. When engaged in writing these songs, his favourite walks were on the banks of the Nith, or the Cluden, particularly near the ruins of Lincluden Abbey; and this beautiful scenery he has very happily described under various aspects, as it appears during the softness and serenity of evening, and during the stillness and solemnity of the moon-light night.

There is no species of poetry, the productions of the drama not excepted, so much calculated to influence the morals, as well as the happiness of a people, as those popular verses which are associated with the national airs, and which being learnt in the years of infancy, make a deep impression on the heart before the evolution of the powers of the understanding. The compositions of Burns, of this kind, now presented in a collected form to the world, make a most important addition to the popular songs of his nation. Like all his other writings, they exhibit independence of sentiment; they are peculiarly calculated to increase those ties which bind generous hearts to their native soil, and to the domestic circle of

their infancy: and to cherish those sensibilities which, under due restriction, form the purest happiness of our nature. If in his unguarded moments he composed some songs on which this praise cannot be bestowed, let us hope that they will speedily be forgotten. In several instances, where Scottish airs were allied to words objectionable in point of delicacy, Burns has substituted others of a purer character. On such occasions, without changing the subject, he has changed the sentiments. A proof of this may be seen in the air of *John Anderson my Joe*, which is now united to words that breathe a strain of conjugal tenderness, that is as higly moral as it is exquisitely affecting.

Few circumstances could afford a more striking proof of the strength of Burns genius, than the general circulation of his poems in England, notwithstanding the dialect in which the greater part are written, and which might be supposed to render them here uncouth or obscure. In some instances he has used this dialect on subjects of a sublime nature; but in general he confines it to sentiments or description of a tender or humorous kind; and, where he rises in elevation of thought, he assumes a purer English style. The singular faculty he possessed of mingling in the same poem humorous sentiments and descriptions, with imagery of a sublime and terrific nature, enabled him to use this variety of dialect on some occasions with striking effect. His poem of *Tam o' Shanter* affords an instance of this. There he passes from a scene of the lowest humour, to situations of the most awful and terrible kind. He is a musician that runs from the lowest to the highest of his keys; and the use of the Scottish dialect enables him to add two additional notes to the bottom of his scale.

Great efforts have been made by the inhabitants of Scotland, of the superior ranks, to approximate in their speech to the pure English standard; and this has made it difficult to write in the Scottish dialect, without exciting in them some feelings of disgust, which in English are scarcely felt. An Englisman who understands the meaning of the Scottish words, is not offended, nay, on certain subjects, he is perhaps pleased with the rustic dialect, as he may be with the Dorick Greek of Theocritus.

But a Scotchman inhabiting his own country, if a man of education, and more especially if a literary character, has banished such words from his writings, and has attempted to banish them from his speech; and being accustomed to hear them from the vulgar daily, does not easily admit of their use in poetry, which require a style elevated and ornamental. A dislike of this kind is, however, accidental, not natural. It is of the species of disgust which we feel at seeing a female of high birth in the dress of a rustic; which if she be really young and beautiful, a little habit will enable us to overcome. A lady who assumes such a dress puts her beauty, indeed, to a severe trial. She rejects—she, indeed, opposes the influence of fashion; she, possibly, abandons the grace of elegant and flowing drapery; but her native charms remain, the more striking, perhaps, because the less adorned; and to these she trusts for fixing her empire on those affections over which fashion has no sway. If she succeeds, a new association arises. The dress of the beautiful rustic becomes itself beautiful, and establishes a new fashion for the young and the gay. And when, in after ages, the contem-

plative observer shall view her picture in the gallery that contain the portraits of the beauties of successive centuries, each in the dress of her repective day, her drapery will not deviate, more than that of her rivals, from the standard of his taste, and he will give the palm to her who excels in the lineaments of nature.

Burns wrote professedly for the peasantry of his country, and by them their native dialect is universally relished. To a numerous class of the natives of Scotland of another description, it may also be considered as attractive in a different point of view. Estranged from their native soil, and spread over foreign lands, the idiom of their country unites with the sentiments and the descriptions on which it is employed, to recal to their minds the interesting scenes of infancy and youth—to awaken many pleasing, many tender recollections. Literary men, residing at Edinburgh or Aberdeen, cannot judge on this point for one hundred and fifty thousand of their expatriated countrymen.

To the use of the Scottish dialect in one species of poetry, the composition of songs, the taste of the public has been for some time reconciled. The dialect in question excels, as has already been observed, in the copiousness and exactness of its terms for natural objects; and in pastoral or rural songs, it gives a Doric simplicity, which is very generally approved. Neither does the regret seem well founded which some persons of taste have expressed, that Burns used this dialect in so many other of his compositions. His declared purpose was to paint the manners of rustic life among his "humble compeers," and it is not easy to conceive, that this could have been done with equal humour and effect, if he had not adopted their idiom. There are some, indeed, who will think the subject too low for poetry. Persons of this sickly taste will find their delicacies consulted in many a polite and learned author; let them not seek for gratification in the rough and vigorous lines, in the unbridled humour, or in the overpowering sensibility of this bard of nature.

To determine the comparative merit of Burns would be no easy task. Many persons afterwards distinguished in literature, have been born in as humble a situation of life; but it would be difficult to find any other who while earning his subsistence by daily labour has written verses which have attracted and retained universal attention, and which are likely to give the author a permanent and distinguished place among the followers of the muses. If he is deficient in grace, he is distinguished for ease as well as energy; and these are indications of the higher order of genius. The father of epic poetry exhibits one of his heroes as excelling in strength, another in swiftness—to form his perfect warrior, these attributes are combined. Every species of intellectual superiority admits, perhaps, of a similar arrangement. One writer excels in force—another in ease; he is superior to them both, in whom both these qualities are united. Of Homer himself it may be said, that like his own Achilles, he surpasses his competitors in mobility as well as strength.

The force of Burns lay in the powers of his understanding, and in the sensibility of his heart; and these will be found to infuse the living principle into all the works of genius which seem destined to immortality. His sensibility had an uncommon range.

He was alive to every species of emotion. He is one of the few poets that can be mentioned, who have at once excelled in humour, in tenderness, and in sublimity; a praise unknown to the ancients, and which in modern times is only due to Ariosto, to Shakespeare, and perhaps to Voltaire. To compare the writings of the Scottish peasant with the works of these giants in literature, might appear presumptuous: yet it may be asserted that he has displayed the *foot of Hercules*. How near he might have approached them by proper culture, with lengthened years, and under happier auspices, it is not for us to calculate. But while we run over the melancholy story of his life, it is impossible not to heave a sigh at the asperity of his fortune; and as we survey the records of his mind, it is easy to see, that out of such materials have been reared the fairest and the most durable of the monuments of genius.

ON

THE DEATH OF BURNS,

BY MR. ROSCOE.

A GREAT number of poems have been written on the death of BURNS, some of them of considerable poetical merit. To have subjoined all of them to the present edition, would have been to have enlarged it to another volume at least; and to have made a selection, would have been a task of considerable delicacy.

The Editor, therefore, presents one poem only on this melancholy subject: a poem which has not before appeared in print. It is from the pen of one who has sympathized deeply in the fate of Burns, and will not be found unworthy of its author—the Biographer of *Lorenzo de' Medici*. Of a person so well known, it is wholly unnecessary for the Editor to speak; and, if it were necessary, it would not be easy for him to find language that would adequately express his respect and his affection.

REAR high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy sheltered valleys proudly spread,
And, SCOTIA, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red.
But ah! what poet now shall tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he, the sweetest bard, is dead,
That ever breath'd the soothing strain!

As green thy towering pines may grow,
As clear thy streams may speed along,
As bright thy summer suns may glow,
As gaily charm thy feathery throng;
But now, unheeded is the song,
And dull and lifeless all around,
For his wild harp lies all unstrung,
And cold the hand that waked its sound.

What tho' thy vigorous offspring rise
In arts, in arms, thy sons excel;
Tho' beauty in thy daughters' eyes,
And health in every feature dwell;
Yet who shall now their praises tell,
In strains impassion'd, fond, and free,
Since he no more the song shall swell
To love, and liberty, and thee.

With step-dame eye and frown severe
His hapless youth why didst thou view?
For all thy joys to him were dear,
And all his vows to thee were due;
Nor greater bless his bosom knew,
In opening youth's delightful prime,
Than when thy favouring ear he drew
To listen to his chanted rhyme.

Thy lonely wastes and frowning skies
To him were all with rapture fraught;
He heard with joy the tempest rise
That waked him to sublimer thought;
And oft thy winding dells he sought,
Where wild flow'rs pour'd their rathe perfume,
And with sincere devotion brought
To thee the summer's earliest bloom.

But ah! no fond maternal smile
His unprotected youth enjoy'd,
His limbs inur'd to early toil,
His days with early hardships tried:
And more to mark the gloomy void,
And bid him feel his misery,
Before his infant eyes would glide
Day-dreams of immortality.

Yet, not by cold neglect depress'd,
With sinewy arm he turn'd the soil,
Sunk with the evening sun to rest,
And met at morn his earliest smile.
Waked by his rustic pipe, meanwhile
The powers of fancy came along,
And sooth'd his lengthened hours of toil,
With native wit and sprightly song.

—Ah! days of bliss, too swiftly fled,
When vigorous health from labour springs,
And bland contentment smooths the bed,
And sleep his ready opiate brings;
And hovering round on airy wings
Float the light forms of young desire,
That of unutterable things
The soft and shadowy hope inspire.

Now spells of mightier power prepare,
Bid brighter phantoms round him dance;
Let Flattery spread her viewless snare,
And Fame attract his vagrant glance;

Let sprightly Pleasure too advance,
Unveil'd her eyes, unclasp'd her zone,
Till, lost in love's delirious trance,
He scorns the joys his youth has known.
Let Friendship pour her brightest blaze,
Expanding all the bloom of soul;
And Mirth concentre all her rays,
And point them from the sparkling bowl;
And let the careless moments roll
In social pleasure unconfined,
And confidence that spurns control
Unlock the inmost springs of mind:

And lead his steps those bowers among,
Where elegance with splendour vies,
Or Science bids her favour'd throng,
To more refined sensations rise:
Beyond the peasant's humbler joys,
And freed from each laborious strife
There let him learn the bliss to prize
That waits the sons of polish'd life.

Then whilst his throbbing veins beat high
With every impulse of delight,
Dash from his lips the cup of joy,
And shroud the scene in shades of night;
And let Despair, with wizard light,
Disclose the yawning gulf below,
And pour incessant on his sight
Her spectred ills and shapes of woe:

And show beneath a cheerless shed,
With sorrowing heart and streaming eyes,
In silent grief where droops her head,
The partner of his early joys;
And let his infants' tender cries
His fond parental succour claim,
And bid him hear in agonies
A husband's and a father's name.

'Tis done, the powerful charm succeeds;
His high reluctant spirit bends;
In bitterness of soul he bleeds,
Nor longer with his fate contends.
An idiot laugh the welkin rends
As genius thus degraded lies;
Till pitying Heaven the veil extends
That shrouds the Poet's ardent eyes.

—Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy sheltered valleys proudly spread,
And Scotia, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But never more shall poet tread
Thy airy height, thy woodland reign,
Since he, the sweetest bard, is dead,
That ever breath'd the soothing strain.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

No I.

TO A FEMALE FRIEND.

WRITTEN ABOUT THE YEAR 1780.

I VERILY believe, my dear E. that the pure genuine feelings of love, are as rare in the world as the pure genuine principles of virtue and piety. This, I hope, will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean, their being written in such a serious manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for a zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear; for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth that gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought, that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it. Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy, which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and symathise with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the divine Disposer of events, with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope he intends to bestow on me, in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that he may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and I will add, worthy of a Christian. The sordid earth-worn may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality, his affection is centered in her pocket; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market, to choose one who is stout and firm, and, as we may say of an oldhorse, one who will be a good drudge and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humour with myself, if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the sex, which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part, I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner. * * * * * *

No. II.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR E.

I do not remember in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love, amongst people of our station of life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management, that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep them company when occasion serves; some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest; there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called love with the greatest part of us, and I must own, my dear E. it is a hard game such a one as you have to play when you meet with such a lover. You cannot refuse but he is sincere, and yet though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest in a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware, that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope my dear E. you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you, that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honour, and by consequence, so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the married state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please; and a warm fancy with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am, the nobler faculties of the mind, with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship, and it has always been my opinion, that the married life was only friendship in a more exalted degree.

If you will be so good as to grant my wishes, and it should please providence to spare us to the latest periods of life, I can look forward and see, that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age; even then, when all other worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me, I will regard my E. with the tenderest affection, and for this plain reason, because she is still possessed of those noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

> 'O! happy state, when souls each other draw
> When love is liberty, and nature law.'

I know, were I to speak in such a style to many a girl who thinks

herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous—but the language of the heart is, my dear E., the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship—but I shall make no apology—I know your good nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss.

No. III.

TO THE SAME.

MY DEAR E.

I HAVE often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that though, in every other situation in life, telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness, which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity, which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct: but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth; and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, courtship is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears, and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be used by any one in so noble, so generous a passion as virtuous love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favour by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me for your partner, your companion, your bosom friend through life; there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this; that you would soon, either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further, that if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly,) by the rules of honour and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest desire to promote your happiness; and if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband, I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover.

No. IV.

TO THE SAME.

I ought in good manners to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write to you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory; "you were sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me" what, without you I never can obtain, "you wish me all kind of happiness." It would be weak and unmanly to say, that without you I never can be happy; but sure I am, that sharing life with you, would have given it a relish, that wanting you, I never can taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me; these, possibly in a few instances may be met with in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with in such a degree in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond any thing I have ever met with in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination has fondly flattered itself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress, still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove in a few days a little farther off, and you, I suppose, will perhaps soon leave this place, I wish to see you or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me rather too warm for friendship, I hope you will pardon it in, my dear Miss ——, (pardon me the dear expression for once.)* *

No. V.

TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH.

SCHOOLMASTER,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

DEAR SIR, *Lochlee, 15th January,* 1783.

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter, without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, Sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as

you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits; and in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient.—One would have thought, that bred as I have been, under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but, to tell you the truth, Sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the word to see, and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any original about him which shows me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways;" and for this darling subject, I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift,* of the unfortunate and the wretched, does not much terrify me: I know that even then my talent for what country folks call "a sensible crack," when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehension about that; for, though indolent, yet, so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist; not indeed for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach, and I scorn to fear the face of any man living; above every thing, I abhor as hell, the idea, of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as *Shenstone*, particularly his *Elegies: Thomson; Man of Feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World; Sterne*, especially his *Sentimental Journey; Macpherson, Ossian*, &c. These are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct; and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lightened up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race—he "who can soar above this little scene of things," can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves? O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and "catching the manners living as they rise," whilst the men of business jostle me on every side as an idle encumbrance in their way.—But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere common-place story,

* The last shift alluded to here, must be the condition of an itinerant beggar.

but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself, from,

Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

No. VI.

[The following is taken from the MS. prose presented by our Bard to Mr. Riddel.]

On rummaging over some old papers, I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out, as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope that, some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus:

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c. by R. B.—a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, and a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational and irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his *own*, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a ploughman thinks and feels, under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the *modes* and *manners* of life, operate pretty much alike I believe, on all the species.

"There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their own observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print."—Shenstone.

"Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."—Ibid.

April, 1793.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed on it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.

There is certainly some connection between love, and music, and poetry; and, therefore, I have always thought a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love composition:

"As tow'rd her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of

turning poet, till I once got heartily in love; and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart.

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our follies or crimes have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance the mind
Has this to say—"It was no deed of mine;"
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—"Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us.
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments,
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime
Can reason down its agonising throbs:
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace!
O, happy! happy! enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul.

March, 1784.

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called *wicked*. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and, what often, if not always weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all: I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of *blackguards*, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character; those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay, sometimes "stained with guilt, * * * * * *"

I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

. . . . . .

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they know such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, *peculiar* to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something in the

"Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,"—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of the wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, "walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:

The wintry west extends his blast, &c.

See Songs.

Shenstone finally observes, that love-verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I had been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery, and conceit, from zeal passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was at the time, genuine from the heart.

Behind yon hills, &c.

See Songs.

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry:* though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry are, the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action: but without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature; the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular

he, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

* * * * *

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that *Being* to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that can render life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow-creatures, that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for the society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave: I do not see that the turn of the mind, and pursuits of any son of poverty and obscurity, are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the even lawful, bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours; and I do not see, but that he may gain Heaven as well (which, by the bye, is no mean consideration), who steals through the vale of life amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he who, coming straight forward, and perhaps bespattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences; where, after all, he can only see and be seen, a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

* * * * *

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-rending tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which shows them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity) are now "buried among the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with a trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he too has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse. She taught him in rustic measures to complain.—Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse. May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world seldom gives to the heart, tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

* * * * *

This is all worth quoting in my MSS., and more than all.

R. B.

No. VII.

TO MR. AIKEN.

[The Gentleman to whom the COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT is addressed.]

SIR, *Ayrshire*, 1786.

I WAS with Wilson my printer, t'other day, and settled all our bygone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him an offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the *first and readiest*, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper; but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer!—an epocha which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantyne, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*. I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable, in a very long life, of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business, the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides, I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad; and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.

* * * * *

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical, in some points, of our current belief, yet, I think, I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children,

whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O, thou great unknown Power! thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

* * * * *

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors,, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenour of my resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or, enjoying it, only threaten to entail farther misery—

* *

To tell the truth, I have little reason for this last complaint, as the world in general has been kind to me, fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast,) still more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my schoolfellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race), were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent on some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "standing idle in the market-place," or left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim.

* *

You see, Sir, that if to *know* one's errors were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance; but according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.

* * *

No. VIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

MADAM, *Ayrshire*, 1786.

I AM truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus; nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honour him with their approbation.

Had you been throughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor the *Saviour of his country.*

"Great patriot hero! ill requited chief!"

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was *The Life of Hannibal;* the next was *The History of Sir William Wallace:* for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious but unfortunate stories. In these boyish days I remember in particular being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

'Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer), that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

No. IX.

TO MRS. STEWART, OF STAIR.

MADAM, 1786.

THE hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promise so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c. which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you: but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song to the tune of *Ettrick Banks,* you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit, both as a tolerable description of one of Nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening, and one of the finest pieces of Nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful young woman; but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connections in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers: and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure

remember—the reception I got, when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness; but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper and goodness of heart. Surely, did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair.

No. X.

DR. BLACKLOCK

TO

THE REVEREND MR. G. LOWRIE.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I OUGHT to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and, perhaps, one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of Nature's force and beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr. Stewart, Professor of Morals in this University, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers; but whether this was done, or not, I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were, therefore, much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published within my memory.

No. XI.

FROM SIR JOHN WHITEFORD.

SIR, *Edinburgh, 4th December*, 1786.

I RECEIVED your letter a few day's ago. I do not pretend to much interest, but what I have I shall be ready to exert in procuring

the attainment of any object you have in view. Your character as a man (forgive my reversing the order), as well as a poet, entitle you, I think, to the assistance of every inhabitant of Ayrshire. I have been told you wished to be made a guager; I submit to your consideration, whether it would not be more desirable, if a sum could be raised by subscription, for a second edition of your poems, to lay it out in the stocking of a small farm. I am persuaded it would be a line of life, much more agreeable to your feelings, and in the end more satisfactory. When you have considered this, let me know, and whatever you determine upon, I will endeavour to promote as far as my abilities will permit. With compliments to my friend the doctor.

I am,

Your friend and well-wisher,

JOHN WHITEFORD.

P. S.—I shall take it as a favour when you at any time send me a new production.

No. XII.

FROM ———

DEAR SIR, *22d December*, 1786.

I LAST week received a letter from Dr. Blacklock, in which he expresses a desire of seeing you. I write this to you, that you may lose no time in waiting upon him, should you not have seen him.

* * * *

I rejoice to hear, from all corners, of your rising fame, and I wish and expect it may tower still higher by the new publication. But, as a friend, I warn you to prepare to meet with your share of detraction and envy—a train that always accompany great men. For your comfort, I am in great hopes that the number of your friends and admirers will increase, and that you have some chance of ministerial, or even . . . . patronage. Now, my friend, such rapid success is very uncommon: and do you think yourself in no danger of suffering by applause and a full purse? Remember Solomon's advice, which he spoke from experience, "stronger is he that conquers," &c. Keep fast hold of your rural simplicity and purity, like Telemachus, by Mentor's aid, in Calypso's isle, or even in that of Cyprus. I hope *you* have also Minerva with you. I need not tell you how much a modest diffidence and invincible temperance adorn the most shining talents, and elevate the mind, and exalt and refine the imagination even of a poet.

I hope you will not imagine I speak from suspicion or evil report. I assure you I speak from love and good report, and good opinion, and a strong desire to see you shine as much in the sunshine as you have done in the shade, and in the practice as you do in the theory of virtue. This is my prayer, in return for your elegant composition in verse. All here join in compliments, and good wishes for your further prosperity.

No. XIII.

TO MR. CHALMERS.

MY DEAR FRIEND, *Edinburgh, 27th Dec.* 1786.

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any for-

giveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to send you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding conceited majesty preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily solemn oath this!—I am, and have been ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour as to write a commentary on the *Revelations*.

. . . . . .

To make you some amends for what, before you reach, this paragraph, you will have suffered, I inclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck. One blank to the address to Edinburgh, "Fair B ——," is the heavenly Miss Burnett, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

I have sent you a parcel of suscription-bills, and have written to Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Aiken, to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is—Care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge Street.

No. XIV.

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTON.

My Lord, *Edinburgh, January*, 1787.

As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted idea of a citizen of the world; but have all those national prejudices which, I believe, glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely any thing to which I am so feelingly alive, as the honour and welfare of my country; and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine, to be distinguished: though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy, then, to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday, on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgements; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks; but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude, I hope, I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest.

No. XV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Edinburgh, 15th January*, 1787.

Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with,

is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib; I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you; but though, every day since I received yours of December 30th, the idea, the wish to write him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners* a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write him to morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentlemen waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglinton, with ten guineas by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thompson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the Literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition.* You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my *Vision*, long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the *Saviour of his Country*, which, sooner or later, I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserved some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feeling certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede, perhaps, as far below the mark of truth.

. . . . . .

Your patronizing me, and interesting yourself in my fame

* Stanzas in the VISION, beginning third stanza, "By stately tower or palace fair," and ending with the first duan.

and character as a poet, I rejoice in it; it exalts me in my own idea; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace?

No. XVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

SIR, 1787.

MRS. DUNLOP has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship, can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, sir, I receive with reverence; only, I am sorry they mostly came too late; a peccant passage or two, that I would certainly have altered, were gone to press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greater part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest hope is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever changing languages and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear—where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttleton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

No. XVII.

FROM DR. MOORE.

SIR, *Clifford Street, January* 23, 1787.

I HAVE just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs. Dunlop for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the *irritable* temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and *curious felicity* of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scat-

tered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh, and I think you peculiarly fortunate in the patronage of Dr. Blair, who, I am informed, interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him: nobody can have a warmer regard for that gentleman than I have, which, independent of the worth of his character, would be kept alive by the memory of our common friend, the late Mr. George B —— e.

Before I received your letter, I sent inclosed in a letter to ——, a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady, which she wrote on reading your Mountain-Daisy: perhaps it may not displease you.*

I have been trying too add to the number of your subscribers, but I find many of my acquaintance are already among them. I have only to add, that with every sentiment of esteem and most cordial good wishes,

I am,

Your obedient humble servant,

J. MOORE.

No. XVIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

REVEREND SIR, *Edinburgh, 15th February*, 1787.

PARDON my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me, in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me: I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the

*The sonnet is as follows :—

WHILE soon the garden's flaunting flowers decay,
And scattered on the earth neglected lie,
The "Mountain Daisy" cherished by the ray
A poet drew from heaven, will never die.
Ah, like that lonely flower the poet rose?
'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale;
He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
By genius in her native vigour nurst,
On nature with impassion'd look he gazed;
Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst
Indignant, and in light unborrow'd blazed.
Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard,
His heaven-taught numbers Fame herself will guard.

affectation of seeming modesty to cover self conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see, with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss W. has done me, please, Sir, return her in my name, my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which, for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore: there are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of time-settled sorrow."

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why.

No. XIX.

FROM DR. MOORE.

DEAR SIR, *Clifford Street, 28th February*, 1787.

Your letter of the 15th gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste, considering where you have been for some time past. And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigour of your native powers.

I am glad that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet—an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

As the new edition of my *View of Society* is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea, to the care of Mr. Creech; and, along with these four volumes for yourself, I have also sent my *Medical Sketches*, in one volume, for my friend Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop; this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give her.

I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of fortune that befalls you: for you are a very great favourite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and of course is a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son, who is at Winchester school, writes to me that he is translating some stanzas of your *Halloween* into Latin verse, for the benefit of his comrades. This union of taste partly proceeds, no doubt, from the cement of Scottish partiality, with which they are all somewhat tinctured. Even

your translator, who left Scotland too early in life for recollection, is not without it.

. . . . . .

I remain, with greatest sincerity,
Your obedient servant,
J. MOORE.

No. XX.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

MY LORD, *Edinburgh*, 1787.

I WANTED to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a "human face divine." The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, "There is my noble patron, my generous benefactor." Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the throes and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition.* I owe to your lordship; and what has not in some instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust, I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more; and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me, then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be

Your lordship's highly indebted,
And ever grateful humble servant.

No. XXI.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

MY LORD,

THE honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember:

> 'Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
> They best can give it who deserve it most.'

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart when you

* It does not appear that the earl granted this request, nor have the verses alluded to ever been found among the MSS.

advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic word, "I, Wisdom, dwell with prudence."

. . . . . .

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times draw forth the swelling tear.

Ext. Property in favour of MR. ROBERT BURNS, *to erect and keep up a Headstone in memory of Poet* FERGUSSON, 1787.

Session-house, within the Kirk of Canongate, the twenty-second day of February, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven years.

Sederunt of the managers of the Kirk and Kirk-yard Funds of Canongate.

WHICH day, the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr. Robert Burns, of date the sixth current, which was read, and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt-book, and of which letter the tenor follows: "To the Honourable Bailies of Canongate, Edinburgh. Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents, for ages to come, will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard, among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

"Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory; a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

"I petition you, then, Gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your very humble servant, (*sic subscribitur*), "ROBERT BURNS."

Thereafter the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr. Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and thereby do, unanimously grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming. Extracted forth of the records of the managers, by

WILLIAM SPROTT, *Clerk.*

No. XXIII.

TO ———.

MY DEAR SIR,

You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, an ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper, to say—thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By-the bye, there is nothing in the whole frame of man which seems to me so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur power sufficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use: but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun; and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the ———.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprott sent it me.

The Inscription on the Stone is as follows:

HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON,

POET.

Born September 5th, 1751.—Died, 16th October, 1774.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
'No storied urn nor animated bust;'
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way,
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.

On the other side of the Stone is as follows:

"By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson."

No. XXIV.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM ———

8th March, 1787.

I AM truly happy to know you have found a friend in ———; his patronage of you does him great honour. He is truly a good man; by for the best I ever knew, or, perhaps, ever shall know, in this world. But I must not speak all I think of him, lest I should be thought partial.

So you have obtained liberty from the magistrates to erect a stone over Fergusson's grave? I do not doubt it; such things have been, as Shakspeare says, "in the olden-time:"

'[The poet's fate, is here in emblem shown,
He ask'd for bread, and he received a stone.'

It is, I believe, upon poor Butler's tomb, that this is written. But how many brothers of Parnassus, as well as poor Butler and poor Fergusson, have asked for bread, and been served with the same sauce!

The magistrates *gave you liberty*, did they? O generous magistrates! * * * *, celebrated for his public spirit, gives a poor poet liberty to raise a tomb to a poor poet's memory! —most generous! * * * once upon a time gave that same poet the mighty sum of eighteen pence for a copy of his works. But, then, it must be considered, that the poet was at this time absolutely starving, and besought his aid with all the earnestness of hunger; and, over and above, he received a ——— worth, at least, one-third of the value, in exchange, but which, I believe, the poet, afterwards, very ungratefully expunged.

Next week I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh; and as my stay will be for eight or ten days, I wish either you or ——— would take a snug, well-aired bed-room for me, where I may have the pleasure of seeing you over a morning cup of tea. But by all accounts, it will be a matter of some difficulty to see you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week before-hand. There is a great rumour here concerning your great intimacy with the Duchess of ———, and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that "cards to invite fly by thousands each night;" and if you had one, I suppose there would also be "bribes to your old secretary." It seems you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, and avoid the fate of poor Eergusson, ... *Quærenda pecunia primum est, virtus post nummos*, is a good maxim to thrive by: you seemed to despise it while in this country; but probably some philosopher in Edinburgh has taught you better sense.

Pray, are you yet engraving as well as printing?—Are you yet seized

> 'With itch of picture in the front,
> With bays of wicked rhyme upon't!'

But I must give up this trifling, and attend to matters that more concern myself: so, as the Aberdeen wit says, *Adieu, dryly, we sal drink phan we meet.*

No. XXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MADAM, *Edinburgh March* 23, 1787.

I READ your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom*; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in which I before printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me

the honour of giving me his strictures; his hints with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects: there I can give you no light; it is all

> "Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
> Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound."

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my greatest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the theme I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimage through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life: 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for; and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable: nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half-sanctify a heedless character: but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour secures me independence; and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only, enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life: but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

* * * * * * *

No. XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM, *Edinburgh, 15th April*, 1787.

THERE is an affection of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broke open your letter, but

"Rude am I in speech,
And therefore little can I grace my cause
In speaking for myself—"

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest, sense of your goodness.

I come abroad in print for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss W.'s copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place; but that we can settle when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr Smith* was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

No. XXVII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 23d April, 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs. Dunlop. I am ill-skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, sir, for the honour you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book, is what I have in common with the world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight; and after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, *Cowden-Knowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c.* I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies, and friendships here, but I am afraid they are of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss W. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.

No. XXVIII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER,

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30th April, 1787.

——— YOUR criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious

* Adam Smith.

qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being either in prose or verse.

I set as little by ——, lords, clergy, critics, &c, as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my Dream, which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in a few weeks, or less, to have the honour of appearing at Dunlop in its defence, in person.

No. XXIX.

TO THE REV. DR. HUGH BLAIR.

Lawn-Market, Edinburgh, 3d May, 1787.

REVEREND AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,

I LEAVE Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for your kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shown me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark; and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and amend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man: I knew very well, that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over. I have made up my mind, that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugo's work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.

No. XXX.

FROM DR. BLAIR.

Argyle-Square, 4th May, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS favoured this forenoon with your obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met with I do not think was beyond your merits; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons, who are advanced in years, can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world, the poems of Ossian; first by the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* which I published, and afterwards, by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and

publishing the *Works of Ossian*; and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular; and, in being brought out all at once from the shades of deepest privacy, to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life, and I trust, will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments, which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend. There is, no doubt, a gloss of novelty which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised if, in your rural retreat, you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be obliged sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always, that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I have taken the liberty, you see, of an old man, to give advice and make reflections which your own good sense will, I dare say, render unnecessary.

As you mention your being just about to leave town, you are going, I should suppose, to Dumfries-shire, to look at some of Mr. Miller's farms. I heartily wish the offers to be made you there may answer; as I am persuaded you will not easily find a more generous and better hearted proprietor to live under than Mr. Miller. When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me, by the 22nd of this month, not in my house in Argyle Square, but at a country-house at Restalrig, about a mile east from Edinburgh, near the Musselburgh road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem,

Dear Sir, Yours sincerely,

HUGH BLAIR.

No. XXXI.

FROM DR. MOORE.

DEAR SIR, *Gifford Street, May* 23, 1787.

I HAD the pleasure of your letter by Mr. Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your poems. You seem to think it incumbent on you to send to each subscriber a number of copies

proportionate to his subscription money; but you may depend upon it, few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed. I must inform you, however, that I took twelve copies for those subscribers for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt; and Lord Eglinton told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them in presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are beautiful, particularly the *Winter Night*, the *Address to Edinburgh*, *Green grow the Rashes*, and the two songs immediately following; the latter of which was exquisite. By the way, I imagine you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge. No kind of poetry demands more delicacy or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his *Odes* than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your *Vision* and *Cotter's Saturday Night*. In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language; you ought, therefore, to be more sparingly for the future in the provincial dialect:—why should you, by using *that*, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste who understand the English language? In my opinion, you should plan some larger work than any you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject, and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history. The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgment, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You *should* also, and very soon *may*, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention, is modern history; that is the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry the Seventh's reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it, when attained, than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is *inconvenient*, and make no apology, when you do write, for having postponed it; be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend Mr. —— told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you of a satirical and humorous nature (in which, by the way, I think you very strong,) which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit, particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*; if you will intrust me with a sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry your chief occupation; this, I hope, will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the nine ladies who have shown you such favour, one of whom visited you in the *auld clay biggin*. Virgil, before you, proved to the

world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry; and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season; when I do, I'll endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from this family.

I am, dear Sir, Your friend and obedient Servant,
J. MOORE.

No. XXXII.

FROM MR. JOHN HUTCHINSON.

SIR, *Jamaica, St. Ann's 14th June*, 1787.

I RECEIVED yours, dated Edinburgh, 2d January, 1787, wherein you acquaint me you were engaged with Mr. Douglas of Port Antonio, for three years, at thirty pounds sterling a-year; and am happy some unexpected accidents intervened that prevented your sailing with the vessel, as I have great reason to think Mr. Douglas's employ would by no means have answered your expectations. I received a copy of your publications, for which I return you thanks, and it is my own opinion, as well as that of such of my friends as have seen them, they are most excellent in their kind; although some could have wished they had been in the English style, as they allege the Scottish dialect is now becoming obsolete, and thereby the elegance and beauties of your poems are in a great measure lost to far the greater part of the community. Nevertheless there is no doubt you had sufficient reasons for your conduct—perhaps the wishes of some of the Scottish nobility and gentry, your patrons, who will always relish their own old country style; and your own inclinations for the same. It is evident from several passages in your works, you are as capable of writing in the English as in the Scottish dialect, and I am in great hopes your genius for poetry, from the specimen you have already given, will turn out both for profit and honour to yourself and country. I can by no means advise you now to think of coming to the West Indies, as I assure you, there is no encouragement for a man of learning and genius here; and am very confident you can do far better in Great Britain, than in Jamaica. I am glad to hear my friends are well, and shall always be happy to hear from you at all convenient opportunities, wishing you succes in all your undertakings. I will esteem it a particular favour if you will send me a copy of the other edition you are now printing.

I am, with respect, Dear Sir, yours, &c.
JOHN HUTCHINSON.

No. XXXIII.

TO MR. WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.

MY DEAR SIR, *Inverness, 5th September*, 1787.

I HAVE just time to write the foregoing,* and to tell you that it

* 'The humble Petition of Bruar-Water to the Duke of Athole.'

was (at least most part of it,) the effusion of an half hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was *extempore*, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr. N——'s chat, and the jogging of the chaise, would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast; what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need, I shall never forget.

The little "angel band!"—I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyars. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair; the amiable, the truly noble Duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table; the lovely "olive plants," as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother; the beautiful Mrs. G——; the lovely, sweet Miss C. &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice; My Lord Duke's kind hospitality, markedly kind, indeed—Mr. G. of F—'s charms of conversation—Sir W. M—'s friendship—in short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

No. XXXIV.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh 17th September, 1787.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I ARRIVED here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six-hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands, by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and druidical circles of stones to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence cross Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the Duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending two days with his Grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows, and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music, Badenoch, &c. till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says, King Duncan was murdered: lastly, from Fort George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen; thence to Stonehive, where James Burnes, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel, still alive, and hale old women. John Caird, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing; warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen

his very grave, what cared I for fishing towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day with the Duke, Duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty, and many compliments from the north, to my mother, and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a birth for William, but am not likely to be successful.—Farewell.

No. XXXV.

FROM MR. R——.

SIR, *Ochtertyre 22d October*, 1787.

'TWAS only yesterday I got Colonel Edmonstoune's answer, that neither the words of *Down the burn Davie*, nor *Dainty Davie* (I forgot which you mentioned), were written by Colonel G. Crawford. Next time I meet him, I will inquire about his cousin's poetical talents.

Enclosed are the inscriptions you requested, and a letter to Mr. Young, whose company and musical talents will, I am persuaded, be a feast to you.* Nobody can give you better hints, as to your

* These inscriptions, so much admired by Burns, are below :—

WRITTEN IN 1768.

FOR THE SALICTUM† AT OCHTERTYRE.

SALUBRITATIS voluptatisque causa,
Hoc Salictum,
Paludem olim infidam,
Mihi meisque desicco et exorno.
Hic, procul negotiis strepituque
Innocuis deliciis
Silvulas inter nascentes reptandi,
Apiumque labores auspiciendi,
Fruor,
Hic, si faxit Deus opt. max.
Prope hunc fontem pellucidum.
Cum quandam juventutis amico superstite,
Sæpe conquiescam senex,
Contentus modicis, mecque lætus!
Sin aliter—
Ævique paululum supersit,
Vos silvulæ, et amici,
Cæteraque amœna,
Valete, diuque lætamini!

ENGLISHED.

To improve both air and soil,
I drain and decorate this plantation of willows,
Which was lately an unprofitable morass,
Here, far from noise and strife,
I love to wander,
Now fondly marking the progress of my trees,
Now studying the bee, its arts and manners.
Here, if is pleases Almighty God,
May I often rest in the evening of life,
Near that transparent fountain,
With some surviving friend of my youth
Contented with a competency,
And happy with my lot.
If vain these humble wishes,
And life draws near a close,
Ye trees and friends,
And whatever else is dear,
Farewell, and long may ye flourish.

. . . . . .

ABOVE THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE.

WRITTEN IN 1775.

MIHI meisque utinam contingat,
Prope Taichi marginem,
Aviro in agello,
Bene viveré fausteque mori!

ENGLISHED.

On the banks of the Teith,
In the small but sweet inheritance
Of my fathers,
May I and mine live in peace,
And die in joyful hope!

. . . . . .

These inscriptions, and the translations, are in the hand-writing of Mr. R——. This gentleman, if still alive, will, it is hoped, excuse the liberty taken by the unknown editor, in enriching the correspondence of Burns with his excellent letter, and with inscriptions so classical and so interesting.

† Salictum—Grove of Willows, Willow-ground.

present plan, than he. Receive also Omeron Cameron, which seemed to make such a deep impression on your imagination, that I am not without hopes it will beget something to delight the public in due time: and, no doubt, the circumstances of this little tale might be varied or extended, so as to make part of a pastoral comedy. Age or wounds might have kept Omeron at home, whilst his countrymen were in the field. His station may be somewhat varied, without losing his simplicity and kindness * * *. A group of characters, male and female, connected with the plot, might be formed from his family, or some neighbouring one of rank. It is not indispensable that the guest should be a man of high station; nor is the political quarrel in which he is engaged, of much importance, unless to call forth the exercise of generosity and faithfulness, grafted on patriarchal hospitality. To introduce state affairs, would raise the style above comedy; though a small spice of them would season the converse of swains. Upon this head I cannot say more than to recommend the study of the character of Eumæus in the Odyssey, which, in Mr. Pope's translation, is an exquisite and invaluable drawing from nature, that would suit some of our country elders of the present day.

There must be love in the plot, and a happy discovery; and peace and pardon may be the reward of hospitality, and honest attachment to misguided principles. When you have once thought of a plot, and brought the story into form, Dr. Blacklock, or Mr. H. Mackenzie, may be useful in dividing it into acts and scenes; for in these matters one must pay some attention to certain rules of the drama. These you could afterwards fill up at your leisure. But, whilst I presume to give a few well-meant hints, let me advise you to study the spirit of my namesake's dialogue,* which is natural without being low, and, under the trammels of verse, is such as country people in their situations speak every day. You have only to bring *down* your own strain a very little. A great plan, such as this, would concenter all your ideas, which facilitates the execution, and makes it a part of one's pleasure.

I approve of your plan of retiring from din and dissipation to a farm of very moderate size, sufficient to find exercise for mind and body, but not so great as to absorb better things. And if some intellectual pursuit be well chosen and steadily pursued, it will be more lucrative than most farms, in this age of rapid improvement.

Upon this subject, as your well-wisher and admirer, permit me to go a step farther. Let those bright talents which the Almighty has bestowed on you, be henceforth employed to the noble purpose of supporting the cause of truth and virtue. An imagination so varied and forcible as yours, may do this in many different modes; nor is it necessary to be always serious, which you have been to good purpose; good morals may be recommended in a comedy, or even in a song. Great allowances are due to the heat and inexperience of youth;—and few poets can boast, like Thomson, of never having writte na line, which, dying, they would wish to blot. In particular, I wish you to keep clear of the thorny walks of satire, which makes a man a hundred enemies for one friend, and is doubly dangerous when one is supposed to extend the slips and weaknesses of indivi-

* Allan Ramsay, in the Gentle Shepherd.

duals to their sect or party. About modes of faith, serious and excellent men have always differed; and there are certain curious questions, which may afford scope to men of metaphysical heads, but seldom mend the heart or temper. Whilst these points are beyond human ken, it is sufficient that all our sects concur in their views of morals. You will forgive me for these hints.

Well! what think you of good Lady C.? It is a pity she is so deaf, and speaks so indistinctly. Her house is a specimen of the mansions of our gentry of the last age, when hospitality and elevation of mind were conspicuous amidst plain fare and plain furniture. I shall be glad to hear from you at times, if it were no more than to show that you take the effusions of an obscure man like me in good part. I beg my best respects to Dr. and Mrs. Blacklock,

And am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

J. RAMSAY.

No. XXXVI.

FROM MR. W———.

Athole House 13th September, 1787.

Your letter of the 5th reached me only on the 11th; what awkward route it had taken I know not; but it deprived me of the pleasure of writing to you in the manner you proposed, as you must have left Dundee before a letter could possibly have got there. I hope your disappointment on being forced to leave us was as great as appeared from your expressions. This is the best consolation for the greatness of ours. I still think with vexation on that ill-timed indisposition which lost me a day's enjoyment of a man (I speak without flattery) possessed of those very dispositions and talents I most admire; one . . . . . You know how anxious the Duke was to have another day of you, and to let Mr. Dundas have the pleasure of your conversation as the best dainty with which he could entertain an honoured guest. You know likewise the eagerness the ladies showed to detain you; but perhaps you do not know the scheme which they devised, with their usual fertility in resources. One of the servants was sent to your driver to bribe him to loosen or pull off a shoe from one of his horses, but the ambush failed. *Proh mirum!* The driver was *incorruptible*. Your verses have given us much delight, and I think will produce their proper effect.* They produced a powerful one immediately; for the morning after I read them, we all set out in procession to the Bruar, where none of the ladies had been these seven or eight years, and again enjoyed them there. The passages we most admired are the description of the *dying trouts*. Of the high fall "twisting strength," is a happy picture of the upper part. The characters of the birds, "mild and mellow," is the thrush itself. The benevolent anxiety for their happiness and safety I highly approve. The two stanzas beginning "Here haply too"—*darkly dashing*, is most descriptively Ossianic.

* * * * *

* "The humble Petition of Bruar-Water to the Duke of Athole."

Here I cannot deny myself the pleasure of mentioning an incident which happened yesterday at the Bruar. As we passed the door of a most miserable hovel, an old woman curtsied to us with looks of such poverty, and such contentment, that each of involuntarily gave her some money. She was astonished, and in the confusion of her gratitude, invited us in. Miss C. and I, that we might not hurt her delicacy, entered—but, good God, what wretchedness! It was a cow-house—her own cottage had been burnt last winter. The poor old creature stood perfectly silent—looked at Miss C. then to the money, and burst into tears—Miss C. joined her, and, with a vehemence of sensibility, took out her purse, and emptied it into the old woman's lap. What a charming scene!—A sweet accomplished girl of seventeen in so angelic a situation! Take your pencil and paint her in your most glowing tints.—Hold her up amidst the darkness of this scene of human woe, to the icy dames that flaunt through the gaieties of life, without ever feeling one generous, one great emotion.

Two days after you left us, I went to Taymouth. It is a charming place, but still I think art has been too busy. Let me be your Cicerone for two days at Dunkeld, and you will acknowledge that in the beauties of naked nature we are not surpassed. The loch, the Gothic arcade, and the fall of the hermitage, gave me most delight. But I think the last has not been taken proper advantage of. The hermitage is too much in common-place style. Every body expects the couch, the book-press, and the hairy gown. The Duke's idea I think better. A rich and elegant apartment is an excellent contrast to a scene of Alpine horrors.

I must now beg your permission (unless you have some other design) to have your verses printed. They appear to me extremely correct, and some particular stanzas would give universal pleasure. Let me know, however, if you incline to give them any farther touches.

Were they in some of the public papers, we could more easily disseminate them among our friends, which many of us are anxious to do.

When you pay your promised visit to the Braes of Ochtertyre, Mr. and Mrs. Graham of Balgowan beg to have the pleasure of conducting you to the bower of *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray*, which is now in their possession. The Duchess would give any consideration for another sight of your letter to Dr. Moore; we must fall upon some method of procuring it for her. I shall inclose this to our mutual friend Dr. B———, who may forward it. I shall be extremely happy to hear from you at your first leisure. Inclose your letter in a cover addressed to the Duke of Athole, Dulkeld.

God bless you,

J——— W———.

No. XXXVII.

FROM MR. A——— M———.

SIR, *6th October*, 1787.

HAVING just arrived from abroad, I had your poems put into my

hands: the pleasure I received from reading them, has induced me to solicit your liberty to publish them amongst a number of our countrymen in America, (to which place I shall shortly return), and where they will be a treat of such excellence, that it would be an injury to your merit and their feeling to prevent their appearing in public.

Receive the following hastily-written lines from a well-wisher.

FAIR fa' your pen, my dainty Rob,
Your leisom way o' writing,
Whiles, glowering o'er your warks I sob,
Whiles laugh, whiles downright greeting:
Your sonsie tykes may charm a chiel,
Their words are wondrous bonny,
But guid Scotch drink the truth does say,
It is as guid as ony
Wi' you this day.

Poor Mailie, troth, I'll nae but think,
Ye did the poor thing wrang,
To leave her tether'd on the brink
Of stank sae wide and lang;
Her dying words upbraid ye sair,
Cry fye on your neglect;
Guid faith! gin ye had got play fair,
This deed had stretch'd your neck
That mournfu' day.

But, wae's me, how dare I fin' faut,
Wi' sic a winsome bardie,
Wha great an' sma's begun to daut,
And tak' him by the gardie;
It sets na ony lawland chiel
Like you to verse or rhyme,
For few like you can fley the de'il,
And skelp auld wither'd Time
On ony day.

It's fair to praise ilk canty calian,
Be he of purest fame,
If he but tries to raise as Allan,
Auld Scotia's bonny name;
To you, therefore, in humble rhyme,
Better I canna gi'e,
And tho' it's but a swatch of thine,
Accept these lines frae me,
Upo' this day.

Frae Jock o' Groats to bonny Tweed,
Frae that e'en to the line,
In ilka place where Scotsmen bleed,
There shall your bardship shine;
Ilk honest chiel wha reads your buick,
Will there aye meet a brither,
He lang may seek and lang will look,
Ere he fin' sic anither
On ony day.

Feart that my cruicket verse should spairge
Some wark o' wordie mak',
I'se na mair o' this head enlarge,
But now my farewell tak';
Lang may you live, lang may you write,
And sing like English Weischell,
This prayer I do myself indite,
From yours still, A——— M———.
This very day.

No. XXXVIII.

FROM MR. J. RAMSAY,

TO THE

REVEREND W. YOUNG, AT ERSKINE.

DEAR SIR, *Ochtertyre, 2d October*, 1787.

Allow me to introduce Mr. Burns, whose poems, I dare say, have given you so much pleasure. Upon a personal acquaintance, I doubt not, you will relish the man as much as his works, in which there is a rich vein of intellectual ore. He has heard some of our Highland *luinigs* or songs played, which delighted him so much that he has made words to one or two of them, which will render these more popular. As he has thought of being in your quarter, I am persuaded you will not think it labour lost to indulge the poet of nature with a sample of those sweet artless melodies, which only want to be *married* (in Milton's phrase) to congenial words. I wish we could conjure up the ghost of Joseph M'D. to infuse into our bard a portion of his enthusiasm for those neglected airs, which do not suit the fastidious musicians of the present hour. But if it be true that Corelli (whom I looked on as the Homer of music) is out of date, it is no proof of their taste;—this, however, is going out of my province. You can show Mr. Burns the manner of singing these same *luinigs;* and, if he can humour it in words, I do not despair of seeing one of them sung upon the stage, in the original style, round a napkin.

I am very sorry we are likely to meet so seldom in this neighbourhood. It is one of the greatest drawbacks that attends obscurity, that one has so few opportunities of cultivating acquaintances at a distance. I hope, however, some time or other, to have the pleasure of beating up your quarters at Erskine, and of hauling you away to Paisley, &c.; meanwhile I beg to be remembered to Messrs. Boog and Mylne.

If Mr. B. goes by ——, give him a billet on our friend Mr. Stuart, who, I presume, does not dread the frown of his *diocesan*.

I am, Dear Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,
J. RAMSAY.

No. XXXIX

FROM MR. RAMSAY, TO DR. BLACKLOCK.

DEAR SIR, *Ochtertyre, 27th October,* 1787.

I RECEIVED yours by Mr. Burns, and give you many thanks for giving me an opportunity of conversing with a man of his calibre. He will, I doubt not, let you know what passed between us on the subject of my hints, to which I have made additions, in a letter sent him t'other day to your care.

* * * * *

You may tell Mr. Burns, when you see him, that Colonel Edmonstoune told me t'other day, that his cousin, Colonel George Crawford, was no poet, but a great singer of songs; but that his eldest brother Robert (by a former marriage) had a great turn that way, having written the words of *The bush aboon Traquair,* and *Tweedside.* That the Mary to whom it was addressed was Mary Stewart of Castlemilk family, afterwards wife of Mr. John Relches. The Colonel never saw Robert Crawford, though he was at his burial fifty-five years ago. He was a pretty young man, and had lived long in France. Lady Ankerville is his niece, and may know more of his poetical vein. An epitaph-monger like me might moralize upon the vanity of life, and the vanity of those sweet effusions.—But I have hardly room to offer my best compliments to Mrs. Blacklock; and I am,

Dear Doctor,
Your most obedient humble servant,
J. RAMSAY.

No. XL.

FROM MR. JOHN MURDOCH.

MY DEAR SIR, *London, 28th October,* 1787.

As my friend, Mr. Brown, is going from this place to your neighbourhood, I embrace the opportunity of telling you that I am yet alive, tolerably well, and always in expectation of being better. By the much-valued letters before me, I see that it was my duty to have given you this intelligence about three years and nine months ago; and have nothing to allege as an excuse but that we poor, busy, bustling bodies in London, are so much taken up with the various pursuits in which we are here engaged, that we seldom think of any person, creature, place, or thing, that is absent. But this is not altogether the case with me; for I often think of you, and *Hornie,* and *Russel,* and an *unfathomed depth,* and *lowan brunstane,* all in the same minute, although you and they are (as I suppose) at a considerable distance. I flatter myself, however, with the pleasing thought, that you and I shall meet some time or other either in Scotland or England. If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London, full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian society; and you may believe, that I am not a little vain that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely cer-

tain that you were the author, till a few days ago, when I made a visit to Mrs. Hill, Dr. M'Comb's eldest daughter, who lives in town, and who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital.

Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis? It would afford matter for a large poem. Here you would have an opportunity of indulging your vein in the study of mankind, perhaps to a greater degree than in any city upon the face of the globe; for the inhabitants of London, as you know, are a collection of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who make it, as it were, the centre of their commerce.

* * * *

Present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Burns, to my dear friend Gilbert, and all the rest of her amiable children. May the Father of the universe bless you all with those principles and dispositions that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your minds from your earliest infancy! May you live as he did! if you do, you can never be unhappy. I feel myself grown serious all at once, and affected in a manner I cannot describe. I shall only add, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself before I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with.

I am, my dear Friend,
Yours sincerely,
JOHN MURDOCH.

No. XLI.

FROM MR ——.

Sir, *Gordon Castle, 31st October,* 1787.

If you were not sensible of your fault as well as of your loss in leaving this place so suddenly, I should condemn you to starve upon *could kail* for *ae towmont* at least; and as for *Dick Latine,** your travelling companion, without banning him *wi' a'* the curses contained in your letter, (which he'll *no* value a *bawbee,*) I should give him nought but *Stra'bogie castocks* to chew for *sax ouks,* or aye until he was as sensible of his error as you seem to be of yours.

* * * *

Your song I showed without producing the author; and it was judged by the Duchess to be the production of Dr. Beattie. I sent a copy of it, by her Grace's desire, to a Mrs. M'Pherson in Badenoch, who sings *Morag* and all other Gaelic songs in great perfection. I have recorded it likewise, by Lady Charlotte's desire, in a book belonging to her ladyship, where it is in company with a great many other poems and verses, some of the writers of which are no less eminent for their political than for their poetical abilities. When the Duchess was informed that you were the author she wished you had written the verses in Scotch.

Any letter directed to me here will come to hand safely, and, if

* Mr. Nicol.

sent under the Duke's cover, it will likewise come free; that is, as long as the Duke is in this country.

I am, Sir, yours sincerely.

No. XLII.

FROM THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

SIR, *Linshart, 14th November*, 1787.

YOUR kind return without date, but of post-mark October 25th, came to my hand only this day; and, to testify my punctuality to my poetic engagement, I sit down immediately to answer it in kind. Your acknowledgment of my poor but just ecomiums on your surprising genius, and your opinion of my rhyming excursions, are both, I think, by far too high. The difference between our two tracts of education and the ways of life is entirely in your favour, and gives you the preference every manner of way. I know a classical education will not create a versifying taste, but it mightily improves and assists it; and though, where both these meet, there may sometimes be ground for approbation, yet where taste appears single, as it were, and neither cramped nor supported by acquisition, I will always sustain the justice of its prior claim to applause. A small portion of taste, this way, I have had almost from childhood, especially in the old Scottish dialect; and it is as old a thing as I remember, my fondness for *Christ's kirk o' the Green*, which I had by heart ere I was twelve years of age, and which, some years ago, I attempted to turn into Latin verse. While I was young, I dabbled a good deal in these things; but on getting the black gown, I gave it pretty much over, till my daughters grew up, who, being all good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favourite tunes, and so extorted these effusions, which have made a public appearance beyond my expectation, and contrary to my intentions, at the same time that I hope there is nothing to be found in them uncharacteristic, or unbecoming the cloth, which I would always wish to see respected.

As to the assistance you propose from me in the undertaking you are engaged in,* I am sorry I cannot give it so far as I could wish, and you, perhaps, expect. My daughters, who were my only intelligencers, are all *foris familiate*, and the old woman their mother has lost that taste. There are two from my own pen, which I might give you, if worth the while. One to the old Scotch tune of *Dumbarton's Drums*.

The other perhaps you have met with, as your noble friend the Duchess has, I am told, heard of it. It was squeezed out of me by a brother parson in her neighbourhood, to accommodate a new Highland reel for the Marquis's birth-day, to the stanza of

'Tune your fiddles, tune them sweetly.' &c.

If this last answer your purpose, you may have it from a brother of mine, Mr. James Skinner, writer in Edinburgh, who, I believe, can give the music too.

There is another humorous thing, I have heard said to be done by the Catholic priest Geddes, and which hit my taste much:

* 'A plan of publishing a complete collection of Scottish Songs,' &c.

'There was a wee wifeikie was coming frae the fair,
Had gotten a little drapikie, which bred her meikle care;
It took upo' the wifie's heart, and she began to spew,
And quo' the wee wifeikie, I wish I binna fou,
I wish, &c. &c.'

I have heard of another new composition, by a young ploughman of my acquaintance, that I am vastly pleased with, to the tune of *The humours of Glen*, which I fear won't do, as the music, I am told, is of Irish original. I have mentioned these, such as they are, to show my readiness to oblige you, and to contribute my mite, if I could, to the patriotic work you have in hand, and which I wish all success to. You have only to notify your mind, and what you want of the above shall be sent to you.

Meantime, while you are thus publicly, I may say, employed, do not sheath your own proper and piercing weapon. From what I have seen of yours already, I am inclined to hope for much good. One lesson of virtue and morality, delivered in your amusing style, and from such as you, will operate more than dozens would do from such as me, who shall be told it is our employment, and be never more minded: whereas, from a pen like yours, as being one of the many, what comes will be admired. Admiration will produce regard, and regard will leave an impression, especially *when example goes along.*

Now binna saying I'm ill bred,
Else, by my troth, I'll not be glad,
For cadgers, ye have heard it said,
And sic like fry,
Maun aye be harland in their trade,
And sae maun I.

Wishing you from my poet-pen, all success, and in my other character, all happiness and heavenly direction,

I remain, with esteem,
Your sincere friend,
JOHN SKINNER.

No. XLIII.

FROM MRS *——,

SIR, *K——k Castle, 30th November*, 1787.

I HOPE you will do me the justice to believe, that it was no defect in gratitude for your punctual performance of your parting promise, that has made me so long in acknowledging it, but merely the difficulty I had in getting the Highland songs you wished to have, accurately noted; they are at last inclosed; but how shall I convey along with them those graces they acquired from the melodious voice of one of the fair spirits of the hill of Kildrummie! *These* I must leave to your imagination to supply. It has powers sufficient to transport you to her side, to recall her accents, and to make them still vibrate in the ears of memory. To her I am indebted for getting the inclosed notes. They are clothed with "*thoughts* that

* Mrs. Ross of Kilravock, Nairnshire.

breathe, and *words* that burn." *These,* however, being in an *unknown* tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that same fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress—why did I say unknown? The language of love is an universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.

I rejoice to find that you were pleased with so many things, persons, and places in your northern tour, because it leads me to hope you may be induced to revisit them again. That the old castle of K———k, and its inhabitants, were amongst these, adds to my satisfaction. I am even vain enough to admit your very flattering application of the line of Addison's; at any rate, allow me to believe that "friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied" in both our hearts, in spite of absence, and that, when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of years standing; and on this footing, consider me as interested in the future course of your fame so splendidly commenced. Any communications of the progress of your muse will be received with great gratitude, and the fire of your genius will have power to warm, even us, frozen sisters of the north.

The friends of K———k and K———e unite in cordial regards to you. When you incline to figure either in your idea, suppose some of us reading your poems, and some of us singing your songs, and my little Hugh looking at your picture, and you'll seldom be wrong. We remember Mr. N. with as much good will as we do any body, who hurried Mr. Burns from us.

Farewell, sir, I can only contribute the *widow's mite* to the esteem and admiration excited by your merits and genius, but this I give as she did, with all my heart—being sincerely yours,

E. R.

No. XLIV.

TO —— DALRYMPLE, ESQ, OF ORANGEFIELD.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh,* 1787.

I SUPPOSE the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me; hummed over the rhymes; and, as I saw they were extempore, said to myself they were well: but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, "I gapit wide but naething spak." I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

. . . . . .

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or

the crushing of the cork rumps; a ducal coronet to Lord George G—— and the protestant interest; or Saint Peter's keys to . . . .

You want to know how I come on. I am just in *statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, "in auld use and wont." The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent being, whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul, that any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let he worshipful squire, H. L. or the reverend Mass J. M. go into their primitive nothing. At best they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

No. XLV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 21st January, 1788.

After six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not *take in* any poor ignorant wretch, by *selling out*. Lately I was a sixpenny private; and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the welfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, as I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop-house.

No. XLVI.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 12th February, 1788.

Some things, in your late letters, hurt me: not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but alas! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A mathematician without religion, is a probable character; an irreligious poet, is a monster.

. . . . . .

No. XLVII.

TO A LADY.

MADAM, *Mossgiel, 7th March,* 1788.

THE last paragraph in yours of the 20th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any little wit I have, I do confess: but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose, to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm, a great deal worse than I do the devil; at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light, but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but God help us who are wits or witlings, by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported?

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila. I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet, of his Muse Scotia, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila: ('Tis a poem of Beatie's in the Scots dialect, which perhaps you have never seen.)

> 'Ye shak your head, but o' my fegs,
> Ye've set auld Scotia on her legs;
> Lang had she lien wi' buffe and flegs,
> Bombaz'd and dizzie,
> Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
> Waes me, poor hizzie.'

No. XLVIII.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Mauchline, 31*st March,* 1788.

YESTERDAY, my dear sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, *Captain O'Kean*, coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.*

I am tolerably pleased with these verses, but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety, about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prosewench that ever picked cinders, or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the —— in me.

My very best compliments, and good wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.

* Here the bard gives the first stanza of the Chevalier's Lament.

No. XLIX.

FROM MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Saughton Mills, 27th April, 1788.

MY DEAR BROTHER FARMER,

I WAS favoured with your very kind letter of the 31st ult. and consider myself greatly obliged to you, for your attention in sending me the song to my favourite air, *Captain O'Kean*. The words delighted me much; they fit the tune to a hair. I wish you would send me a verse or two more; and if you have no objection, I would have it in the Jacobite style. Suppose it should be sung after the fatal field of Culloden by the unfortunate Charles; Tenducci personates the lovely Mary Stuart in the song *Queen Mary's Lamentation*.—Why may not I sing in the person of her great-great-great grandson?†

Any skill I have in country business you may truly command. Situation, soil, customs of countries may vary from each other, but *Farmer Attention* is a good farmer in every place. I beg to hear from you soon. Mrs. Cleghorn joins me in best compliments.

I am, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, your very sincere friend. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

No. L.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MADAM, *Mauchline, 28th April,* 1788.

YOUR powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the excise business without solicitation? and as it costs me only six months' attendance for instructions, to entitle me to a commission; which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed; I thought five and thirty pounds a-year was no bad dernier resort for a poor poet, if

† Our poet took this advice. The whole of this beautiful song, as it was afterwards finished, is below:—

THE CHEVALIER'S LAMENT.

THE small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear thro' the vale;
The hawthorn trees blow in the dews of the morning,
And wild scatter'd cowslips bedeck the green dale:

But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,
While the lingering moments are number'd by care?
No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,
Can soothe the sad bosom of joyless despair.

The deed that I dared could it merit their malice—
A king and a father to place on his throne?
His right are these hills, and his right are these valleys,
Where the wild beasts find shelter, but I can find none.

But 'tis not my sufferings thus wretched forlorn,
My brave gallant friends, 'tis your ruin I mourn;
Your deeds proved so loyal, in hot bloody trial,
Alas! can I make you no sweeter return!

fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment, where the force of the winds and rain was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the window, walls, &c. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable;* your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

. . . . . .

Your books have delighted me; *Virgil, Dryden,* and *Tasso,* were all equal strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next.

No. LI.

FROM THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

DEAR SIR, *Linshart, 28th April,* 1788.

I RECEIVED your last, with the curious present you have favoured me with, and would have made proper acknowledgments before now, but that I have been necessarily engaged in matters of a different complexion. And now that I have got a little respite, I make use of it to thank you for this valuable instance of your good will, and to assure you that, with the sincere heart of a true Scotsman, I highly esteem both the gift and the giver; as a small testimony of which I have herewith sent you for your amusement (and in a form which I hope you will excuse for saving postage) the two songs I wrote about to you already. *Charming Nancy* is the real production of genius in a ploughman of twenty years of age at the time of its appearing, with no more education than what he picked up at an old farmer-grandfather's fire-side, though now, by the strength of natural parts, he is clerk to a thriving bleach field in the neighbourhood. And I doubt not but you will find in it a simplicity and delicacy, with some turns of humour, that will please one of your taste; at least it pleased me when I first saw it, if that can be any recommendation to it. The other is entirely descriptive of my own sentiments, and you may make use of one or both as you shall see good.*

* CHARMING NANCY.

A SONG, BY A BUCHAN PLOUGHMAN.

TUNE—"Humours of Glen."

SOME sing of sweet Mally, some sing of fair Nelly,
And some call sweet Susie the cause of their pain;
Some love to be jolly, some love melancholy,
And some love to sing of the Humours of Glen.

You will oblige me by presenting my respects to your host, Mr. Cruikshank, who has given such high approbation to my poor *Latinity*; you may let him know, that as I have, likewise been a dabbler in Latin poetry, I have two things that I would, if he desires it, submit not to his judgment, but to his amusement: the

But my only fancy, is my pretty Nancy,
In venting my passions, I'll strive to be plain,
I'll ask no more treasure, I'll seek no more pleasure,
But thee, my dear Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.

Her beauty delights me, her kindness invites me,
Her pleasant behaviour is free from all stain;
Therefore my sweet jewel, O do not prove cruel,
Consent, my dear Nancy, and come be my ain:
Her carriage is comely, her language is homely,
Her dress is quite decent when ta'en in the main:
She's bloeming in feature, she's handsome in stature,
My charming, dear Nancy, O wert thou my ain!

Like Phœbus adorning the fair ruddy morning
Her bright eyes are sparkling, her brows are serene,
Her yellow locks shining, in beauty combining,
My charming sweet Nancy, wilt thou be my ain?
The whole of her face is, with maidenly graces
Array'd like the gowans, that grow in yon glen,
She's well shap'd and slender, true hearted and tender,
My charming, sweet Nancy, O wert thou my ain!

I'll seek through the nation for some habitation,
To shelter my dear from the cold, snow, and rain,
With songs to my deary, I'll keep her aye cheery,
My charming, sweet Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.
I'll work at my calling to furnish thy dwelling,
With ev'ry thing needful thy life to sustain;
Thou shalt not sit thee single, but by a clear ingle,
I'll marrow thee, Nancy, when thou art my ain.

I'll make true affection the constant direction,
Of loving my Nancy while life doth remain;
Tho' youth will be wasting, true love shall be lasting,
My charming, sweet Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.
But what if my Nancy should alter her fancy,
To favour another be forward and fain,
I will not compel her, but plainly I'll tell her,
Begone thou false Nancy, thou'se ne'er be my ain.

THE OLD MAN'S SONG.

TUNE—"Dumbarton's Drum."

BY THE REV. J. SKINNER.

O! WHY should old age so much wound us? O
There is nothing in't all to confound us, O
For how happy now am I,
With my old wife sitting by,
And our bairns and our oes all around us, O!

We began in the world wi' naething, O,
And we've jogg'd on, and toil'd for the ae' thing, O;
We made use of what we had,
And our thankful hearts were glad,
When we got the bit meat and the claithing, O.

We have lived all our lifetime contented, O,
Since the day we became first acquainted, O;
It's true we've been but poor,
And we are so to this hour,
Yet we never pined nor lamented, O.

one a translation of *Christ's Kirk o' the Green*, printed at Aberdeen some years ago; the other *Batrachomyomachia Homeri Latinis versibus cum additamentis*, given in lately to Chalmers, to print if he pleases. Mr. C. will know *Seria non semper delectant, non joca semper. Semper delectant seria mixta jocis.*

I have just room to repeat compliments and good wishes from,

Sir, your humble servant,

JOHN SKINNER.

No. LII.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

SIR, *Mauchline, 3d May*, 1787.

I ENCLOSE you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great, unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events; prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the Continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, sir, to claim it as my privilege, to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the

We ne'er thought of schemes to be wealthy, O,
By ways that were cunning or stealthy, O,
But we always had the bliss,
And what farther could we wiss,
To be pleased wi' ourselves, and be healthy, O.

What tho' we canna boast of our guineas, O,
We have plenty of Jockies and Jeanies, O,
And these, I am certain, are
More desirable by far,
Than a pock full of poor yellow sleenies, O.

We have seen many a wonder and ferly, O;
Of changes that almost are yearly, O,
Among rich folk, up and down,
Both in country and town,
Who now live but scrimply, and barely, O.

Then why should people brag of prosperity, O?
A straiten'd life we see is no rarity, O;
Indeed we've been in want,
And our living been but scant,
Yet we never were reduced to need charity, O.

In this house we first came together, O,
Where we've long been a Father and Mither, O,
And tho' not of stone and lime,
It will last us a' our time,
And I hope we shall never need anither, O.

And when we leave this habitation, O,
We'll depart with a good commendation, O,
We'll go hand in hand, I wiss,
To a better house than this,
To make room for the next generation, O.

Then why should old age so much wound us, O?
There is nothing in it all to confound us, O;
For how happy now am I,
With my auld wife sitting by,
And our bairns and our oes all around us, O.

having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.

No. LIII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MADAM, *Mauchline, 4th May,* 1788.

DRYDEN'S *Virgil* has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the *Georgics* are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me; and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation; but, alas! when I read the *Georgics*, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland poney, drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter, to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the *Æneid*. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please the learned critic; but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances, a *servile* copier of Homer. If I had the *Odyssey* by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him, in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion; in some future letter, you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most.

No. LIV.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM, *27th May,* 1788.

I HAVE been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which, unlike . . . . . , has followed me in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance, that "here I had no continuing city;" and but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life, insignificance and poverty.

* * * *

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things

on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers of the same nature with madame; are from time to time their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay, a good part of their very thoughts, sold for months and years, ... , not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the important few.* We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast, who taught "Reverence thyself." We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride.

* * * *

No. LV.

TO THE SAME.

AT MR. DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

Ellisland, 13th June, 1788.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain."

GOLDSMITH.

THIS is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky *spence;* far from every object I love, or by whom I am loved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except *Jenny Geddes* the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares, and novel plans, hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

"The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his single woes?" &c.

Your surmise, madam, is just; I am indeed a husband.

. . . . . .

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I en-

* Servants in Scotland are hired from term to term, i. e. from Whitsunday to Martinmas, &c.

abled her to *purchase* a shelter; and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition: a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage, by a more than common handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page, but *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny pay-wedding.

* * * * * *

No. LVI.

TO MR. P. HILL.

My dear Hill,

I shall say nothing at all to your mad present—you have so long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the meantime, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning, so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and all. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful knavery; and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate, that it chokes me in the gullet; and the *pulvilis'd* feathered, pert coxcomb, is so disgustful in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for your patience and a bit of my cheese. I know that you are no niggard to your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There in my eye is our friend Smellie, a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with: when you see him, as, alas! he too is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness—a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the sunmer sun.

C——h, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David* with his *Courant* comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those ——— bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in

* Printer of the Edinburgh Evening Courant.

a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned: so, a fresh egg is a very good thing; but when thrown at a man in a pillory it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious friend, D———r, I would wish also to be a partaker; not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.†

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he is in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest J—— S———e, he is such a contented happy man that I know not what can annoy him, except perhaps he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of law, I shall have nothing to do with them professedly—the Faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy I pass by; their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honour to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's arms inn here, to have, at the next county-meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfries-shire whigs, to enable them to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.

No. LVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 2d August, 1788.

HONOURED MADAM,

YOUR kind letter welcomed me yesternight, to Ayrshire. I am indeed seriously angry with you at the *quantum* of your *luckpenny;* but vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and, as yet, have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last that brought tears in my

† A club of choice spirits.

eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart," is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum;* and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that too at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them.

"Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
That nature finest strung."

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject farther, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favours the muse has conferred on me in that country.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deck'd in silken stole,
'Grave these maxims on thy soul:
Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour;
Fear not clouds will ever lour.

Happiness is but a name;
Make content and ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor-gleam:
Fame, an idle restless dream:
Peace, the tend'rest flow'r of spring;
Pleasures, insects on the wing.
Those that sip the dew alone,
Make the butterflies thy own;
Those that would the bloom devour,
Crush the locusts, save the flower.
For the future be prepared,
Guard wherever thou canst guard;
But thy utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou canst not shun.
Follies past give thou to air,
Make their *consequence* thy care:
Keep the name of man in mind,
And dishonour not thy kind.
Reverence with lowly heart
Him whose wond'rous work thou art;
Keep his goodness still in view,
Thy trust and thy example too.
Stranger go! heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Beadesman of Nithside.

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intended inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my excise hopes depend, Mr. Graham of Fintry; one of the

worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts "unhousel'd, unanointed, unanell'd."

* * * * *

Pity the tuneful muses' helpless train;
Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main:
The world were blest, did bless on them depend;
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"
The little fate bestows they share as soon;
Unlike sage, proverb'd, wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son
Who life and wisdom at one race begun;
Who feel by reason and who give by rule;
Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should;*
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good?

Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye;
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy!
But come * * * *

Here the muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing to me. I never received it. Poor fellow! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell!

No. LVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, 10th August, 1788.

MY MUCH HONOURED FRIEND,

Yours of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing, except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, madam, is the identical woman . . . When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords;" as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail, till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my eclatant return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray

her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her, till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery was in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

* * * * *

I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honour, I have never *seen* the individual in stance.

* * * * *

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, &c. without probably entailing on me at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements, which *(pardonnez moi, madame)* are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry.

* * * * *

I like your way in your church-yard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, in progression, by me, to send when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind, is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dissocial, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

No. LIX.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, 16th August, 1788.

I AM in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

> "Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
> Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?"

* * * * *

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children:—I could indulge these reflections, till my humour should ferment into the most acrid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you; as I declare upon my soul I always find that the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. ——'s to dinner, for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind; from the lady of the house quite

flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage as a professional man was expected: I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, Independence of Spirit, and Integrity of Soul! In the course of conversation, *Johnson's Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning,

"Raving winds around her blowing."

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words—"Mine, madam—they are indeed my very best verses:" she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says, well "king's caff is better than ither folks' corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls;" but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of good taste.

* * * * *

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom—I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called *The Life and Age of Man*, beginning thus,

"'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
Of God and fifty three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The Life and Age of Man*.

It is this way of thinking—it is those melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men—If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

"What truth on earth so precious as the lie!"

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophizings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week:

and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest.

No. LX.

O. R. GRAHAM, OF FINTRY, ESQ.

SIR,

WHEN I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asks old Kent, why he wished to be in his service, he answers, "Because you have in your face which I could like to call master." For some such reason, sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

* * * * * * *

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it; may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

* * * * * * *

WHEN nature her great master-piece designed,
And fram'd her last, best work, the human mind,
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,
She form'd of various parts the various man.

Then first she calls the useful many forth;
Plain plodding industry, and sober worth;
Thence peasants, farmers, native sons of earth,
And merchandie's whole genus take their birth.
Each prudent cit a warm existence finds,
And all mechanics' many-aproned kinds.
Some other rarer sorts are wanted yet,
The lead and buoy are needful to the net:
The *caput mortuum* of gross desires
Makes a material, for mere knights and squires:
The martial phosphorus is taught to flow,
She kneads the lumpish philosophic dough,

Then marks th' unyielding mass with grave designs,
Law, physics, politics, and deep divines :
Last, she sublimes th' Aurora of the poles,
The flashing elements of female souls.
The order'd system fair before her stood,
Nature well pleased pronounced it very good ;
But here she gave creating labour o'er,
Half-jest, she tried one curious labour more.
Some spumy, fiery, *ignis fatuus* matter ;
Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter ;
With arch alacrity and conscious glee
(Nature may have her whim as well as we,
Her Hogarth-art perhaps she meant to show it)
She forms the thing, and christens it—a poet.
Creature, tho' oft the prey of care and sorrow,
When bless'd to-day unmindful of to-morrow.
A being form'd t' amuse his graver friends,
Admired and praised—and there the homage ends :
A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life ;
Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live :
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.

But honest Nature is not quite a Turk,
She laugh'd at first, then felt for her poor work.
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,
She cast about a *standard tree* to find ;
And to support his helpless woodbine state,
Attach'd him to the *generous truly great.*
A title, and the only one I claim,
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous Graham.

Pity the tuneful muses' hapless train,
Weak, timid landmen on life's stormy main !
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,
That never gives—tho' humbly takes enough ;
The little fate allows, they share as soon,
Unlike sage, proverb'd, wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
The world were blessed, did bless on them depend,
Ah, that " the friendly e'er should want a friend !"
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,
Who feel by reason, and who give by rule,
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool !)
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should*—
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good
Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye !
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy !
But come ye who the godlike pleasure know,
Heaven's attribute distinguish'd—to bestow !
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race :
Come *thou* who giv'st with all a courtier's grace ;

Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul half blushing, half afraid,
Backward, abash'd to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
Heavens, should the branded character be mine!
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit,
Soars on the spurning wing of injured merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity, the best of words, should be but wind!
So, to heaven's gates the lark-shrill song ascends,
But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronize their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all your future days!
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The pie-ball'd jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteen pence a-week I've lived before.
Though, thanks to heaven, I dare even that last shift,
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:
That placed by thee, upon the wish'd-for height,
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.

No. LXI.

TO MR. P. HILL.

Mauchline, 1st October, 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Loch Lomond," you were so obliging as to send to me. Were I impannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "guilty! A poet of Nature's making!" It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic author, in his own walks of study and composition, before him, as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother poet forgive me, if I venture to hint, that his imitation of that immortal bard, is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required.—e. g.

> To soothe the madding passions all to peace,
> ADDRESS.
>
> To soothe the throbbing passions into peace,
> THOMSON.

I think the *Address* is, in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading: in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but like a true poet of Nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple, and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like

"Truth,
The soul of every song that's nobly great."

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but a prose criticism. Is not the phrase, in *line* 7, *page* 6, "Great lake," too much vulgarized by every-day language, for so sublime a poem?

"Great mass of waters, thence for nobler song,"

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes, is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

"Winding margin of an hundred miles."

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew tree—"Ben Lomond's lofty cloud-enveloped head," &c. are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has been often tried, yet our poet, in his grand picture, has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original:

'The gloom
Deep seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire.'

In his preface to the storm, "the glens how dark between," is noble highland landscape! The "rain plowing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. Ben Lomond's "lofty, pathless top," is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it is truly great; the

'Silver mist,
'Beneath the beaming sun,'

is well described: and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry "some faint idea of the vision bright," to entertain her "partial listening ear," is a pretty thought. But, in my opinion, the most beautiful passages in the whole poem, are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Loch Lomond's "hospitable flood;" their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c. and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in the *Seasons*. The idea of "the floating tribes distant seem, far glistering to the moon," provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. "The howling winds," the "hideous roar' of "the white cascades," are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth, with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention, that the last verse of the sixteenth page

is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph, beginning, "The gleaming lake," &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the two last paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began—I should like to know who the author is but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.*

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him two books, *Letters on the Religion essential to Man*, a book you sent me before; and, *The World Unmasked, or the Philosopher the greatest Cheat.*—Send me them by the first opportunity. The *Bible* you sent me is truly elegant; I only wish it had been in two volumes.

No. LXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, AT MOREHAM MAINS.

MADAM, *Mauchline, 13th November* 1788.

I HAD the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K. and Miss G. M'K., with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as many a poet does his patron . . . . . but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendoes of compliment that if it had not been for a lucky recollection, how much additional lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remarks, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest quey† in Ayrshire, which he made a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on hallowday, I am determined annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

. . . . . .

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first convenience to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

* The poem entitled An Address to Loch Lomond, is said to be written by a gentleman, now one of the masters of the High Scool at Edinburgh, and the same who translated the beautiful story of the Paria, as published in the Bee of Dr. Anderson.

† Heifer.

No. LXIII.

TO ———

SIR, *November* 8, 1788.

NOTWITHSTANDING the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectaries have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to evil, they have given us; still the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, or insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart.—Even the unhappy partner of our kind who is undone—the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes—who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? we forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went last Wednesday to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgments to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties civil and religious; to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family, the ruling features in whose administration have ever been, mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh, abusive manner, in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which I am afraid was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those, whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless GOD for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time, cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done had we been in their situation.

"The bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart," may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present Royal Family, and the sentiments of our days: but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects, rights?—Might not the epithets of bloody and tyrannical be with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, sir, seems to be this—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness a nation, and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence that light of science, which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling

liberties of his people: with us, luckily the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but likewise, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless GOD; but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being. Who would believe, sir, that, in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people, under our national protection, should complain not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart! I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the cause, but I dare say the American Congress, in 1776, will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.*

No. LXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1788.

MY DEAR HONOURED FRIEND,

YOURS, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. Almost "blind and wholly deaf," are melancholy news of human nature; but when told of a much loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie, which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom; and I trem-

* This letter was sent to the publisher of some newspaper, probably the publisher of the Edinburgh Evening Courant.

ble at the omens of your late and present ailing habits and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the man, and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges, and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs: not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time.—If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatenings good: I am to be at the new-year-day fair of Ayr, and by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I will come and see you.

. . . .

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world!—They spoil these "social offsprings of the heart." Two veterans of the "men of the world" would have met, with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase, "Auld lang syne,' exceedingly expressive. There is an old song and true which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Ker will save you the postage.*

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it, than in half a dozen of modern English Bacchanalians. Now I am on my hobby horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily.

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
An' fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith;
Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the ferry,
The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
And I maun lea'e my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are ranked ready:
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody:
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore,
Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar,
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary.

* Here follows the song of Auld lang syne.

No. LXV.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

WHO HAD HEARD HE HAD BEEN MAKING A BALLAD ON HER, INCLOSING THAT BALLAD.

MADAM, *December*, 1788.

I UNDERSTAND my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Riddel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something so provoking in the idea of being the burden of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what the ballad was: so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, which I dare say he never intended; and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have reached your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman, who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental groups of life into which one is thrown, wherever this gentlemen met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely he said, as *nota bene* to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the verses I do myself the honour to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice, than the delicacy of my taste, that I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox protestant would call a species of idolatry which acts on my fancy like inspiration, and I can no more desist from rhyming on the impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence though the object which hit my fancy were grey-bearded age; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment, are equally striking and unaffected, by heavens! though I had lived threescore years a married man, and threescore years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea; and I am truly sorry that the inclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to a subject.

No. LXVI.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFORD.

SIR, *December*, 1788.

MR. M'KENZIE, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and, (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, sir, in one or two instances, been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by ——— friends to them, and honoured acquaintance to

me: but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of a needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life, who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is by any means, a necessary concomitant of poetic turn, but believe a careless, indolent inattention to economy, is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making, a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-lickng servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar, gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven, my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one, who pretended in the least to the *manners of the gentleman*, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion—but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happines, and every one of that lovely flock, who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to guard the blow!

No. LXVII.

FROM MR. G. BURNS.

Mossgiel, 1*st January*, 1789.

DEAR BROTHER,

I HAVE just finished my new-year's-day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, "through the dark postern of time long elapsed," I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the GOD of SEASONS is to us; and that however some clouds may seem to lower over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs. Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William, the first time you see him.

I am, dear brother, yours,

GILBERT BURNS.

No. LXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, New-Year-Day Morning, 1789.

THIS, dear madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to GOD that I came under the apostle James's description!—*the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings; every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquility and self-enjoyment, should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste, should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian, that I approve of set times, and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought, which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue skyed noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday.

* * * * *

I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza;" a piece that struck my fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: "On the 5th of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer."

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices, in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with peculiar delight. I never heard the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew, in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a GOD that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.

No. LXIX.

TO DR. MOORE.

SIR, *Ellisland, near Dumfries, 4th Jan.* 1729.

As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week, these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian Colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have, at last, got some business with you, and business-letters are written by the style-book.—I say my business is with you, sir, for you have never had any with me, except the busines that benevolence has in the manner of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late eclat was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from Nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him "who forms the secret bias of the soul;"—but as I firmly believe, that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains. At least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good nature enough like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle addressed to R. G. Esq. or, Robert Graham, of Fintry. Esq. a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of——

. . . . . .

I believe I shall, in whole, £100 copy-right included, clear about £400 some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare.

. . . . . .

To give the rest of my story in brief, I have married "my Jean,"

and taken a farm; with the first step I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse.—I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much—I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part; I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged; and I thought that throwing a little filial piety, and fraternal affection, into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy; I have an excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr. Graham, who is one of the commissioners of excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

. . . . . .

Thus secure of a livelihood, "to thee, sweet poetry, delightful maid," I would consecrate my future days.

No. LXX.

TO BISHOP GEDDES.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 3d Feb. 1789

VENERABLE FATHER,

As I am conscious that wherever I am you do me the honour to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination, to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and family were incumbrances, which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself, on account of habitual follies, to give them no worse name, which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity would, to me, ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made another choice.

* * * * *

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure; I have good hopes of my farm; but should they fail, I have an excise commission, which on my simple petition, will, at any time, procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honour from any profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is great to any thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect.

* * * * *

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess my reverend and much-honoured friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten. I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the muses. I am determined to study man and nature, and in that view incessantly; and to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been turning my lyre on the banks of Nith. Some larger poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you, which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy sir, with which you were pleased to honour me, you must still allow me to challenge; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connection with the merely great, I cannot lose the patronizing notice of the learned and the good, without the bitterest regret.

No. LXXI.

FROM THE REV. P. C——.

SIR, *2d January*, 1789.

If you have lately seen Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, you have certainly heard of the author of the verses which accompany this letter. He was a man highly respectable for every accomplishment and virtue which adorns the character of a man or a Christian. To a great degree of literature, of taste, and poetic genius, was added an invincible modesty of temper, which prevented, in a great degree, his figuring in life, and confined the perfect knowledge of his character and talents to the small circle of his chosen friends. He was untimely taken from us, a few weeks ago, by an inflamatory fever, in the prime of life—beloved by all, who enjoyed his acquaintance, lamented by all, who have any regard for virtue and genius. There is a woe pronounced in Scripture against the person whom all men speak well of; if ever that woe fell upon the head of mortal man, it fell upon him. He has left behind him a considerable number of compositions, chiefly poetical; sufficient, I imagine, to make a large octavo volume. In particular, two complete and regular tragedies, a farce of three acts, and some smaller poems on different subjects. It falls to my share, who have always lived in the most intimate and uninterrupted friendship with him from my youth upwards, to transmit to you the verses he wrote on the publication of your incomparable poems. It is probable they were his last, as they were found in his scrutoire, folded up in the form of a letter addressed to you, and I imagine, were only prevented from being sent by himself, by that melancholy dispensation which we still bemoan. The verses themselves I will not pretend to criticise when writing to a gentleman whom I consider as entirely qualified to judge of their merit. They are the only verses he seems to have attempted in the Scottish style; and I hesitate not to say, in general, that they will bring no dishonour on the Scottish muse;—and allow me to add, that if it is your opinion they are not unworthy of the author, and

will be no discredit to you, it is the inclination of Mr. Mylne's friends, that they should be immediately published in some periodical work, to give the world a specimen of what may be expected from his performances in the poetic line, which, perhaps, will be afterwards published for the advantage of his family.

. . . . . .

I must beg the favour of a letter from you, acknowledging the receipt of this, and to be allowed to subscribe myself with great regard,

Sir, your most obedient servant,
P. C.———.

No. LXXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th March, 1789.

Here am I, my honoured friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man, who has a home, however humble or remote—if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort—the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

"Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you."

When I must sculk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—"What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches, in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?" I have read somewhere of a monarch (in Spain I think it was), who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Prince's-street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his Majesty's liege subjects in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that too within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem, which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one great fault—it is, by far, too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish Poets, that the very term of

Scottish Poetry borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. C. I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the meantime allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine . . . . . I give you them, that as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them, be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming ———, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind:
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And ev'n sick'ning envy must approve.*

No. LXXIII.

TO THE REV. P. CARFRAE.

REVEREND SIR, 1789.

I DO not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter, which accompanied Mr. Mylne's poem.

. . . . . .

I am much to blame: the honour Mr. Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing, though melancholy circumstance, of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid that, in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an indundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr. M's poems in a magazine, &c., be at all prudent, in my opinion it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the labours of a man of genius, are, I hope, as honourable as any profits whatever; and Mr. Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest, which fate has denied

* These beautiful lines, we have reason to believe, are the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed.

himself to reap. But let the friends of Mr. Mylne's fame (among whom I crave the honour of ranking myself,) always keep in eye his respectability as a man and a poet, and take no measure that, before the world knows any thing about him, would risk his name and character being classed with the fools of the times.

I have, sir, some experience of publishing; and the way in which I would proceed with Mr. Mylne's poems, is this:—I would publish in two or three English and Scottish public papers, any one of his English poems which should, by private judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it at the same time, as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer, of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish soon, by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family:—not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think the poetic merits of the deceased; and to secure, in the most effectual manner, to those tender connexions, whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits.

No. LXXIV.

TO DR. MOORE.

SIR, *Ellisland*, 23d *March*, 1789.

The gentleman who will deliver this is a Mr. Nielson, a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood, and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr. Nielson is on his way for France, to wait on his Grace of Queensbury, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c. for him, when he has crossed the channel. I should not have dared to take this liberty with you, but that I am told, by those who have the honour of your personal acquaintance, that to be a poor honest Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you, and that to have it in your power to serve such a character, gives you much pleasure.

. . . . . .

The enclosed ode is a compliment to the memory of the late Mrs. ———, of ———. You probably knew her personally, an honour of which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years in her neighbourhood, and among her servants and tenants. I know that she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the particular part of her conduct which roused my poetic wrath, she was much less blameable. In January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put up at Bailie Wigham's in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place. The frost was keen, and the grim evening and howling wind was ushering in a night of snow and drift. My horse and I were very much fatigued with the labours of the day, and just as my friend the Bailie and I were bidding defiance to the storm, over a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs. ———, and poor I am forced to brave all the horrors of the tempestuous night, and jade my horse, my young favour-

ite horse, whom I had just christened Pegasus, twelve miles further on, through the wildest muirs and hills of Ayrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn. The powers of poesy and prose sink under me, when I would describe what I felt. Suffice it to say, that when a good fire, at New Cumnock, had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the enclosed ode.

I was at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with Mr. Creech; and I must own, that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

No. LXXV.

Ellisland, 2d April, 1789.

I WILL make no excuses, my dear Bibliopolus,, (God forgive me for murdering language!) that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper.

* * *

It is economy, sir; it is that cardinal virtue, prudence; so I beg you will sit down, and either compose or borrow a panegyric. If you are going to borrow, apply to

* *

to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality; that I write to one of my most esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

O frugality! thou mother of ten thousand blessings—thou cook of fat beef and dainty greens!—thou manufacturer of warm Shetland hose, and comfortable surtouts!—thou old housewife, darning thy decayed stockings with thy ancient spectacles on thy aged nose; lead me, hand me in thy clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and through those thickets, hitherto inaccessible, and impervious to my anxious wearied feet:—not those Parnassian craggs, bleak and barren, where the hungry worshippers of fame are, breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell; but those glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures; where the sunny exposure of plenty, and the hot walls of profusion, produce those blissful fruits of luxury, exotics in this world, and natives of paradise—Thou withered sybil, my sage conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored presence!—The power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care, and tender arms! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman, or favourite, and adjure the god, by the scenes of his infant years, no longer to repulse me as a stranger or an alien, but to favour me with his peculiar countenance and protection! He daily bestows his greatest kindness on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him, that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits! Pledge yourself for me, that, for the glorious cause of LUCRE, I will do any thing, be any thing—but the horse-leach of private oppression, or the vulture of public robbery!

* * *

But to descend from heroics,

* * *

I want a Shakspeare; I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my prose commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honour that I owe Mr. Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton mills, my worthy friend, and your well-wisher. Please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings worth of any thing you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you is already begun, under the direction of Captain Riddel. There is another in emulation of it going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr. Monteith, of Closeburn, which will be on a greater scale than ours. Captain R. gave his infant society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for "The Monkland Friendly Society,"—a copy of *The Spectator, Mirror,* and *Lounger; Man of the World, Guthrie's Geographical Grammar,* with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

When I grow richer, I will write to you on gilt post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five guinea errand with

My dear sir,

Your faithful, poor, but honest friend,

R. B.

No. LXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 2d April, 1789.

. . . . . .

I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy, but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading these give half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

. . . . . .

I have a poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Right Hon. C. J. Fox; but how long that fancy may hold, I cannot say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched, as follows:—

SKETCH.

How wisdom and folly meet, mix, and unite;
How virtue and vice blend their black and their white;
How genius, th' illustrious father of fiction,
Confounds rule and law, reconciles contradiction—
I sing: if these mortals, the critics, should bustle,
I care not, not I, let the critics go whistle.

But now for a patron, whose name and whose glory,
At once may illustrate and honour my story.

Thou first of our orators, first of our wits;
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem mere lucky hits;
With knowledge so vast, and with judgment so strong,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went far wrong;
With passions so potent, and fancies so bright,
No man with the half of e'm e'er went quite right;

A sorry, poor misbegot son of the muses,
For using thy name offers fifty excuses.

Good L—d, what is man! for as simple he looks,
Do but try to develope his hooks and his crooks;
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,
And in all he's a problem must puzzle the devil.

On his ruling passion Sir Pope hugely labours,
That like the old Hebrew walking-switch, eats up its neighbours:
Mankind are his show-box—a friend, would you know him?
Pull the string, ruling passion, the picture will show him.
What pity, in rearing so beauteous a system,
One trifling particular, truth, should have miss'd him;
For, spite of his fine theoretic positions,
Mankind is a science defies definitions.

Some sort all our qualities each to its tribe,
And think human nature they truly describe;
Have you found this, or t'other? there's more in the wind,
As by one drunken fellow his comrades you'll find.
But such is the flaw, or the depth of the plan,
In the make of that wonderful creature call'd Man.
No two virtues, whatever relation they claim,
Nor even two different shades of the same,
Though like as was ever twin brother to brother,
Possessing the one shall imply you've the other.

. . . . . .

On the 20th current I hope to have the honour of assuring you, in person, how sincerely I am,

. . . . . .

No. LXXVII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

My Dear Sir, *Ellisland, 4th May*, 1789.

Your *duty free* favour of the 26th April I received two days ago: I will not say I perused it with pleasure; that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, sir, with delicious satisfaction. —In short, it is such a letter, that not you nor your friend, but the legislature, by express proviso in their postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags, and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem which I think will be something to your taste.* One morning lately as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying, for our sport, individu-

* See Poem "On Seeing a Fellow Wound a Hare.

als in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

. . . . . .

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.

C—— is a glorious production of the author of man. You, he, and the noble Colonel of the C—— F—— are, to me,

"Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my breast."

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of "*three good fellows ayont the glen.*"

No. LXXVIII.

[THE poem, in the preceding letter, had also been sent by our bard to Dr. Gregory for his criticism. The following is that gentleman's reply.]

FROM DR. GREGORY.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, 2nd June*, 1789.

I TAKE the first leisure hour I could command, to thank you for your letter, and the copy of verses inclosed in it. As there is real poetic merit, I mean both fancy, and tenderness and some happy expressions, in them, I think they well deserve that you should revise them carefully and polish them to the utmost. This I am sure you can do if you please, for you have great command both of expression and of rhymes: and you may judge from the two last pieces of Mrs. Hunter's poetry, that I gave you, how much correctness and high polish enhance the value of such compositions. As you desire it, I shall, with great freedom, give you my *most rigorous* criticisms on your verses. I wish you would give me another edition of them, much amended, and I will send it to Mrs. Hunter, who I am sure, will have much pleasure in reading it. Pray, give me likewise for myself, and her too, a copy (as much amended as you please) of the *Water Fowl on Loch Turit.*

The *Wounded Hare* is a pretty good subject; but the measure, or stanza, you have chosen for it, is not a good one; it does not *flow* well; and the rhyme of the fourth line is almost lost by its distance from the first; and the two interposed, close rhymes. If I were you, I would put it into a different stanza yet.

Stanza 1.—The execrations in the first two lines are strong or coarse; but they may pass. "Murder-aiming" is a bad compound epithet, and not very intelligible. "Blood-stained," in stanza iii. line 4, has the same fault: *Bleeding* bosom is infinitely better. You have accustomed yourself to such epithets, and have no notion how stiff and quaint they appear to others, and how incongruous with poetic fancy, and tender sentiments. Suppose Pope had written, "Why that blood-stained bosom gored," how would you have liked it? *Form* is neither a poetic, nor a dignified, not a plain, common word: it is a mere sportsman's word; unsuitable to pathetic or serious poetry.

"Mangled" is a coarse word. "Innocent," in this sense, is a nursery word; but both may pass.

Stanza 4.—"Who will now provide that life a mother only can

bestow," will not do at all: it is not grammar—it is not intelligible. Do you mean "provide for that life which the mother had bestowed and used to provide for?"

There was a ridiculous slip of the pen, "Feeling" (I suppose) for "Fellow," in the title of your copy of verses; but even fellow would be wrong: it is but a colloquial and vulgar word, unsuitable to your sentiments.

"Shot" is improper too.—On seeing a *person* (or a sportsman) wound a hare; it is needless to add with what weapon; but if you think otherwise, you should say, *with a fowling-piece.*

Let me see you when you come to town, and I will show you some more of Mrs. Hunter's poems.*

No. LXXIX.

TO MR. M'AULEY.

OF DUMBARTON.

DEAR SIR, *4th June*, 1789.

Though I am not without my fears respecting my fate at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin, which that arch-vagabond, Satan, who, I understand, is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth—I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and from inability, I fear must remain your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear by my old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, "Hale and weel, and living;" and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers, whom the Great Manager of the Drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the Muses; the only gipseys with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows, to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licences of former days, will of course fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial proscription. In my family devotion, which, like a good presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm, "Let not the

* It must be admitted, that this criticism is not more distinguished by its good sense, than by its freedom from ceremony. It is impossible not to smile at the manner in which the poet may be supposed to have received it. In fact it appears, as the sailors say, to have thrown him quite a-back. In a letter which he wrote soon after, he says, "Dr. G——— is a good man, but he crucifies me."—And again, "I believe in the iron justice of Dr. G———; but like the devils, I believe and tremble." However, he profited by these criticisms.

errors of my youth," &c. and that other, "Lo, children are God's heritage," &c. in which last Mrs. Burns, who, by the bye, has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah.

. . . .

No. LXXX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

DEAR MADAM, *Ellisland, 21st June,* 1789.

WILL you take the effusions, the miserable effusions of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring. I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages.

. . . .

Monday Evening.

I have just heard . . . . . give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me! Religion, my honoured friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made; these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave; must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore, Jesus Christ was from God.

. . . .

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness: and whatever injures society at large or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one, whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind.

No. LXXXI.

FROM DR. MOORE.

DEAR SIR, *Clifford Street, 10th June,* 1789.

THANK you for the different communications you have made me of your occasional productions in manuscript, all of which have merit and some of them merit of a different kind from what appears in

the poems you have published. You ought carefully to preserve all your occasional productions, to correct and improve them at your leisure: and when you can select as many of these as will make a volume, publish it either at Edinburgh or London, by subscription: On such an occasion, in may be in my power, as it is very much in my inclination, to be of service to you.

If I were to offer an opinion, it would be, that in your future productions you should abandon the Scotish stanza and dialect, and adopt the measure and language of modern English poetry.

The stanza which you use in imitation of *Christ Kirk on the Green*, with the tiresome repetition of "that day," is fatiguing to English ears, and I should think not very agreeable to Scottish.

All the fine satire and humour of your *Holy Fair* is lost on the English; yet, without more trouble to yourself, you could have conveyed the whole to them. The same is true of some of your other poems. In your *Epistle to J. S*——, the stanza from that beginning with this line, "This life, so far's I understand," to that which ends with, "Short while it grieves," are easy, flowing, gaily philosophical, and of Horatian elegance—the language is English, with a *few* Scottish words, and some of those so harmonious, as to add to the beauty: for what poet would not prefer *gloaming* to *twilight*.

I imagine, that by carefully keeping, and occasionally polishing and correcting these verses, which the muse dictates, you will within a year or two, have another volume as large as the first, ready for the press; and this without diverting you from every proper attention to the study and practice of husbandry, in which I understand you are very learned, and which I fancy you will choose to adhere to as a wife, while poetry amuses you from time to time as a mistress. The former like a prudent wife, must not show ill humour, although you show a sneaking kindness to this agreeable gipsey, and pay her occasional visits, which in no manner alienates your heart from your lawful spouse, but tends on the contrary to promote her interest.

I desired Mr. Cadell to write to Mr. Creech to send you a copy of *Zeluco*. This performance has had great success here, but I shall be glad to have your opinion of it, because I know you are above saying what you do not think.

I beg you will offer my best wishes to my very good friend Mrs. Hamilton, who I understand is your neighbour. If she is as happy as I wish her, she is happy enough. Make my compliments also to Mrs. Burns, and believe me to be, with sincere esteem,

Dear Sir, yours, &c.

No. LXXXII.

FROM MISS J. L——

SIR, *Loudon-House, 12th July*, 1717.

THOUGH I have not the happiness of being personally acquainted with you, yet amongst the number of those who have read and admired your publications, may I be permitted to trouble you with this. You must know, sir, I am somewhat in love with the Muses, though I cannot boast of any favours they have deigned to confer

upon me as yet; my situation in life has been very much against me as to that. I have spent some years in and about Ecclefechan (where my parents reside), in the station of a servant, and am now come to Loudon-House, at present possessed by Mrs. H——: she is daughter to Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, whom I understand you are acquainted with. As I had the pleasure of perusing your poems, I felt a partiality for the author, which I should not have experienced had you been in more dignified station. I wrote a few verses of address to you, which I did not then think of ever presenting: but as fortune seems to have favoured me in this, by bringing me into a family by whom you are well known and much esteemed, and where perhaps I may have an opportunity of seeing you; I shall, in hopes of your friendship, take the liberty to transcribe them.

* * * * *

Fair fa' the honest rustic swain,
The pride o' a' our Scottish plain:
Thou gi'es us joy to hear thy strain,
And notes sae sweet:
Old Ramsay's shade revived again
In thee we greet.

Loved Thalia, that delightfu' muse,
Seem'd lang shut up as a recluse;
To all she did her aid refuse
Since Allan's day:
'Till Burns arose, then did she chuse
To grace his lay.

To hear thy sang all ranks desire,
Sae weel you strike the dormant lyre;
Apollo with poetic fire
Thy breast does warm;
And critics silently admire
Thy art to charm.

Cæsar and Luath weel can speak,
'Tis pity e'er their gabs should steek,
But into human nature keek,
And knots unravel:
To hear their lectures once a-week,
Nine miles I'd travel.

Thy dedication to G. H.
An unco bonnie homespun speech,
Wi' winsome glee the heart can teach
A better lesson,
Than servile bards, who fawn and fleech
Like beggar's messon.

When slighted love becomes your theme,
And women's faithless vows you blame;
With so much pathos you exclaim,
In your lament;
But glanced by the most frigid dame,
She would relent.

The daisy too ye sing wi' skill;
And weel ye praise the whisky gill;
In vain I blunt my feckless quill,
Your fame to raise;
While echo sounds from ilka hill
To Burns's praise.

Did Addison or Pope but hear,
Or Sam, that critic most severe,
A ploughboy sing with throat sae clear,
They in a rage,
Their works would a' in pieces tear,
And curse your page.

Sure Milton's eloquence were faint
The beauties of your verse to paint,
My rude unpolish'd strokes but taint
Their brilliancy;
Th' attempt would doubtless vex a saint
And weel may me.

The task I'll drop with heart sincere,
To heaven present my humble pray'r,
That all the blessings mortals share,
May be by turns,
Dispensed by an indulgent care
To Robert Burns.

. . . . . .

Sir, I hope you will pardon my boldness in this; my hand trembles while I write to you, conscious of my unworthiness of what I would most earnestly solicit, viz. your favour and friendship; yet hoping you will show yourself possessed of as much generosity and good nature as will prevent your exposing what may justly be found liable to censure in this measure, I shall take the liberty to subscribe myself,

Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,

J—— ——.

P.S.—If you would condescend to honour me with a few lines from your hand I would take it as a particular favour, and direct to me at Loudon-House, near *Galstock*.

No. LXXXIII.

FROM MR. ——.

MY DEAR SIR, *London, 5th August*, 1789.

Excuse me when I say, that the uncommon abilities which you possess, must render your correspondence very acceptable to any one. I can assure you, I am particularly proud of your partiality, and shall endeavour, by every method in my power, to merit a continuance of your politeness.

. . . . .

When you can spare a few moments I should be proud of a letter from you, directed for me, Gerrard Street, Soho.

. . . . .

I cannot express my happiness sufficiently at the instance of your attachment to my late inestimable friend, Bob Fergusson, who was particularly intimate with myself and relations.* While I recollect with pleasure his extraordinary talents, and many amiable qualities, it affords the greatest consolation, that I am honoured with the correspondence of his successor in national simplicity and genius. That Mr. Burns has refined in the art of poetry, must readily be admitted; but notwithstanding many favourable representations, I am yet to learn that he inherits his convivial powers.

There was such a richness of conversation, such a plenitude of fancy and attraction in him, that when I call the happy period of our intercourse to my memory, I feel myself in a state of delirium. I was then younger than him by eight or ten years; but his manner was so felitious, that he enraptured every person around him, and infused into the young and the old, the spirit and animation which operated on his own mind.

I am dear sir, yours, &c.

No. LXXXIV.

TO MR. ———,

IN ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING.

MY DEAR SIR,

The hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons, will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the fifth of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in . . . . I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention were, I hope, very and deservedly indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt. The . . ., so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such a degree of elegance of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence; but if there was a man equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost.

. . . . . .

When I received your letter I was transcribing, for . . . my letter to the Magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Fergusson, and their edict in consequence of my petition; but now I shall send them to . . . . Poor Fergusson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is: and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is: thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-seeking powers return to their sordid matter: where titles and honours are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and thoughtless, though often destructive follies,

* The erection of a monument to him.

which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

Adieu, my dear Sir! so soon as your present views and schemes are concentrated in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you, as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to

Yours, &c.

No. LXXXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

DEAR MADAM, *Ellisland, 6th September*, 1789.

I HAVE mentioned in my last, my appointment to the excise, and the birth of little Frank: who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic, from your poetess, Mrs. J. L——; a very ingenious, but modest composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country: and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her; I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no daub at fine drawn letter-writing; and except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August struck me with melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present.

. . . . . .

Would I could write you a letter of comfort I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition, that should equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected, that I was opposing the most ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life in the language of the book of Job,

'Against the day of battle and of war.'—

spoken of religion.

' 'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis this that gilds the horror of our night,
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction or repels his dart:
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.'

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The Doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall however digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende*!

No. LXXXVI.

FROM DR. BLACKLOCK.

Edinburgh, 24th August, 1789.

Dear Burns, thou brother of my heart,
Both for thy virtues and thy art:
If art it may be call'd in thee,
Which nature's bounty, large and free,
With pleasure on thy breast diffuses,
And warms thy soul with all the Muses.
Whether to laugh with easy grace.
Thy numbers move the sage's face,
Or bid the softer passions rise,
And ruthless souls with grief surprise,
'Tis Nature's voice distinctly felt,
Through thee her organ, thus to melt.

Most anxiously I wish to know,
With thee of late how matters go;
How keeps thy much-loved Jean her health!
What promises thy farm of wealth?
Whether the Muse persists to smile,
And all thy anxious cares beguile?
Whether bright fancy keeps alive?
And how thy darling infants thrive?

For me, with grief and sickness spent,
Since I my journey homeward bent,
Spirits depress'd no more I mourn,
But vigour, life, and health return.
No more to gloomy thoughts a prey,
I sleep all night, and live all day;
By turns my book and friend enjoy,
And thus my circling hours employ;
Happy while yet these hours remain,
If Burns could join the cheerful train,
With wonted zeal, sincere and fervent,
Salute once more his humble servant,

THO. BLACKLOCK.

No. LXXXVII.

TO DR. BLACKLOCK.

Ellisland, 21st October, 1789.

Wow, but your letter made me vauntie!
And are ye hale, and weel, and cantie?
I ken'd it still your wee bit jauntie,
Wad bring ye to:
Lord send you aye as weel's I want ye,
And then ye'll do.

The ill thief blaw the Heron south!
And never drink be near his drouth!
He tauld mysel by word o' mouth,
He'd tak my letter;
I lippen'd to the chiel in trouth,
And bade nae better.

But aiblins honest Master Heron,
Had at the time some dainty fair one,
To ware his theologic care on,
And holy study;
And tired o' sauls to waste his lear on,
E'en tried the body.

But what d'ye think, my trusty fier,
I'm turn'd a gauger—Peace be here!
Parnassian queens, I fear, I fear,
Ye'll now disdain me,
And then my fifty pounds a-year
Will little gain me.

Ye glaiket, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia's wimplin streamies,
Lowp, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies:
Ye ken yoursel my heart right proud is,
I needna vaunt,
But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies,
Before they want.

Lord help me thro' this warld o' care!
I'm weary sick o't late and air!
Not but I hae a richer share
Than mony ithers;
But why should ae man better fare,
And a' men brithers!

Come Firm Resolve take thou the van,
Thou stalk o' carl-hemp in man!
And let us mind, faint heart ne'er wan
A lady fair:
Wha does the utmost that he can,
Will whyles do mair.

But to conclude my silly rhyme,
(I'm scant o' verse, and scant o' time,)
To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

My compliments to sister Beckie;
And eke the same to honest Lucky;—
I wat she is a dainty chuckie,
As e'er tread clay!
And gratefully my gude auld cockie,
I'm yours for aye.

ROBERT BURNS.

No. LXXXVIII.

TO R. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

SIR, *9th December*, 1789.

I HAVE a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution, as if one should say, "You have found Mr. Graham a very kind and powerful friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought by every thing in your power to keep alive and cherish." Now though, since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connexion of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable, yet, sir, allow me to flatter myself, that, as a poet and an honest man, you first interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still, you permit me to approach you.

I have found the excise business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected; owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr. Mitchell, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr. Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are short and far between; but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to inclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquarian, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London news paper. Though I dare say you have none of the solemn-league-and-covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in Lord George Gordon, and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr. M'Gill of one of the clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help, him poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor Doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being

thrown out to the mercy of the winter-winds. The inclosed ballad on that business is, I confess, too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience, that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The election ballad, as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of boroughs. I do not believe there will be such a hard run match in the whole general election.

. . . . . .

I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who ——— is a character that one cannot speak of with patience.

Sir J. J. does "what man can do," but yet I doubt his fate.

. . . . . .

No. LXXXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 13th of December, 1789.

Many thanks, dear madam, for your sheetful of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system, the state of which is most conducive to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous head-ache, that I have been obliged to give up, for a time, my excise books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a-week over ten muir parishes. What is Man! To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with ife which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life, is a something at which he recoils.

> 'Tell us, ye dead; will none of you in pity
> Disclose the secret———
> What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!
> ———'tis no matter;
> A little time will make us learn'd as you are.'

Can it be possible, that when I resign this frail feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced, that I am no more to those that knew me, and the few that loved me: when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories of another world beyond death: or are they all alike, baseless visions, and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it

must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is the world to come? Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me.——Muir! thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly, and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine!—There should I with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters, I trust thou art no impostor, and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave, is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," by being yet connected together in a better world, where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conception, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain, that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James and Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you, on the sincerity of a man, who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good befalling my honoured friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre miserable*

R. B.

No. XC.

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

SIR,

The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithdale. I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new and may

be useful. How far it may be deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, Esq. of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddel got a number of his tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance or death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings, and at each of their meetings, which where held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry-money, and the credit they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of their volumes in rotation. He whose name stood, for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves: and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddel's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were *Blair's Sermons, Robertson's History of Scotland, Hume's History of the Stuarts, the Spectator, Idler, Adventurer, Mirror, Lounger, Observer, Man of Feeling, Man of the World, Chrysal, Don Quixote, Joseph Andrews, &c.* A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brute he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success, I am

Sir,

Your humble servant,

A PEASANT.

No. XCI.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

DEAR BROTHER, *Ellisland, 11th January,* 1790.

I MEAN to take advantage of the frank, though I have not in my present frame of mind much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a . . . . state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to . . .! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have gotten a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote to me by the manager of the company, a Mr. Sutherland, who is a man of apparent worth. On New-year's-day evening I gave him the following prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause.

No song nor dance I bring from your great city,
That queens it o'er our taste—the more's to pity:
Though, by the bye, abroad why will you roam?
Good sense and taste are natives, here at home;
But not for panegyric I appear,
I come to wish you all a good new year!
Old Father Time deputes me here before ye,
Not for to preach, but tell his simple story:
The sage grave ancient cough'd, and bade me say,
"You're one year older this important day,"
If *wiser too*—he hinted some suggestion,
But 'twould be rude, you know, to ask the question;
And with a would—be roguish leer and wink,
He bade me on you press this one word—"THINK!"

Ye sprightly youths, quite flush with hope and spirit,
Who think to storm the world by dint of merit,
To you the dotard has a deal to say,
In his sly, dry, sententious, proverb way!
He bids you mind, amid your thoughtless rattle,
That the first blow is ever half the battle;
That though some by the skirt may try to snatch him,
Yet by the forelock is the hold to catch him,
That whether doing, suffering, or forbearing,
You may do miracles by persevering.

Last, though not least in love, ye youthful fair,
Angelic forms, high Heaven's peculiar care!
To you old Bald-pate smooths his wrinkled brow,
And humbly begs you'll mind the important—NOW!
To crown your happiness, he asks your leave,
And offers, bliss to give and to receive.

For our sincere, though haply weak endeavours,
With grateful pride we own you many favours,
And howsoe'er our tongue may ill reveal it,
Believe our glowing bosoms truly feel it.

. . . . . .

I can no more,—If once I was clear of this * * *farm, I should respire more at ease.

No. XCII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland 25th January, 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written to you, madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much esteemed friend, for your kind letters; but why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes! When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic licence, nor poetic rant; and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot without pain, and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the Aurora frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honour of giving him birth, but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune. He was one of those daring adventurous spirits, which Scotland beyond any other country is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:—

> "Little did my mother think,
> That day she cradled me,
> What land I was to travel in,
> Or what death I should die."

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine; and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanza of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female, lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish:

> "O that my father had ne'er on me smiled;
> O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
> O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
> But that I had died when I was young!
>
> O that the grave it were my bed;
> My blankets were my winding sheet;
> The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a';
> And O sae sound as I should sleep!"

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery, than the exclamation in the

last line. Misery is like love; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little god-son the small-pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him, acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are tired of it, next time I have the honour of assuring you how truly I am, &c.

No. XCIII.

FROM MR. CUNNINGHAM.

. . . . . 28*th January*, 1790.

In some instances it is reckoned unpardonable to quote any one's own words; but the value I have for your friendship, nothing can more truly or more elegantly express, than

> "Time but the impression stronger makes,
> As streams their channels deeper wear."

Having written to you twice without having heard from you, I am apt to think my letters have miscarried. My conjecture is only framed upon the chapter of accidents turning up against me, as it too often does, in the trivial, and I may with truth add, the more important affairs of life; but I shall continue occasionally to inform you what is going on among the circle of your friends in these parts. In these days of merriment, I have frequently heard your name proclaimed at the jovial board—under the roof of our hospitable friend at Stenhouse Mills, there were no

> "Lingering moments number'd with care."

I saw your *Address to the New Year* in the Dumfries Journal. Of your productions I shall say nothing, but my acquaintances allege that when your name is mentioned, which every man of celebrity must know often happens, I am the champion, the Mendoza, against all snarling critics, and narrow-minded reptiles, of whom a *few* on this planet do *crawl*.

With best compliments to your wife, and her black-eyed sister, I remain, yours, &c.

No. XCIV.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 13*th February*, 1790.

I beg your pardon, my dear and much valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

> 'My poverty but not my will consents.'

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except

one poor widowed half sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebian foolscap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from Burgundy and Pine-apple, to a dish of Bohea, with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village priest; or a glass of whiskey-toddy, with the ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding exciseman—I make a vow to enclose this sheet full of epistolary fragments in that my only scrap of gilt-paper.

I am indeed your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have scarcely a spare moment. It is not that I *will not* write to you: Miss Burnet is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace the Duke of ——— to the powers of ———, than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write to you; should you doubt it, take the following fragment, which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment, and *circumvolute* periods, as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology.

. . . . . .

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM, *December*, 1789.

WHERE are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity, who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion? or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight.

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness, and misery, it is surely worthy of an inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method, economy, and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyment; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real substantial blessings; and yet do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, contrive, notwithstanding, to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen. I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life, not as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive, in humble stations, &c. &c.

* * * *

Sunday, 14*th February*, 1790.

GOD help me! I am now obliged to join

'Night to day, and Sunday to the week.'

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am ——— past redemption, and what is worse, ——— to all eternity. I am deeply read in *Boston's Fourfold State, Marshall on Sanctification, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest, &c.* but "There is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there," for me; so I shall e'en

turn Arminian, and trust to "Sincere, though imperfect obedience."

* * * *

Tuesday, 16*th*.

Luckily for me I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world: if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a Deist, but I fear, every fair, unprejudiced inquirer must in some degree be a sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man; but like electricity, phlogiston, &c. the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much; that we are to live for ever, seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain!

* * * *

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr. Cleghorn soon. God bless him and all his concerns! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship, be present with all their kindest influence, when the bearer of this, Mr. Syme, and you meet! I wish I could also make one.—I think we should be. . . . . .

Finally, brethren, farewell! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind, think on these things, and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

No. XCV.

TO MR. HILL.

Ellisland, 2*d March*, 1790.

At a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment their library by the following books, which you are to send us as soon as possible:—*The Mirror, The Lounger, Man of Feeling, Man of the World*, (these for my own sake I wish to have by the first carrier) *Knox's History of the Reformation; Rae's History of the Rebellion in* 1715; any good *History of the Rebellion in* 1745; *A Display of the Session Act and Testimony*, by Mr. Gibb; *Hervey's Meditations; Beveridge's Thoughts*; and another copy of *Watson's Body of Divinity*.

I wrote to Mr. A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much, *An Index to the Excise Laws, or an abridgement of all the Statutes now in force, relative to the Excise*, by Jellinger Symons: I want three copies of this book; if it is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants, too, *A Family Bible*, the larger the better, but second-handed, for

he does not choose to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or cheap, copies of *Ottway's Dramatic Works, Ben Johnson's, Dryden's, Congreve's, Wycherley's, Vanbrugh's Cibber's,* or any *Dramatic Works* of the more modern—*Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman,* or *Sheridan.* A good copy too of *Moliere,* in French, I much want. Any other good dramatic authors in that language I want also; but comic authors, chiefly, though I should wish to have *Racine, Corneille,* and *Voltaire* too. I am in no hurry for all, or any of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend? and how is Mrs. Hill? I trust if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My good-wife too has a charming "wood-note wild;" now could we four——

* * * *

I am out of all patience with this vile world, for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures; except in a few scoundrelly instances, I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have, is born with us; but we are placed here amid so much nakedness, and hunger, and poverty, and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may EXIST! Still there are, in every age, a few souls, that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even to the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes. Adieu!

No. XCVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 10*th April,* 1790.

I HAVE just now, my ever-honoured friend. enjoyed a very high luxury, in reading a paper of the *Lounger.* You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator, Adventurer, Rambler,* and *World;* but still with a certain regret, that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

> '——— States of native liberty possest,
> Though very poor, may yet be very blest.'

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, "English ambassador, English court," &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by "the Commons of England." Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience such ideas, as my "country; her independence; her honour; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land," &c.—I believe these, among your *men of the world*—

men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrongheadedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE; but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right or wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is, not what they OUGHT, but what they DARE. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interest, and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purpose, is on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man;* a man to lead nations. But are great abilities, complete without a flaw, and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *man of the world:* but I call on honour, virtue, and worth, to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then*, the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper*: Virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are in that case, of scarcely the import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honour, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstacy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet considering the harsh gratings, and inharmomic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them: I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61, has cost me more honest tears than anything I have read of a long time. Mr. M'Kenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots, and in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he certainly outdoes him in the tender and pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am not counsel learned in the laws of criticism,) I estimate as the first performance in its kind I ever saw. From what books, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence; in short, more of all that enobles the soul to herself, or endears her to others—than from the simple affecting tale of poor Harley.

Still, with all my admiration of M'Kenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, madam, that among the few favoured of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are), there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay in some degree, absolutely disqualifying

for the truly important business of making a man's way into life. If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, A——, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honour to be, madam, yours, &c.

No. XCVII.

FROM MR. CUNNINGHAM.

MY DEAR BURNS, *Edinburgh, 25th May* 1790.

I AM much indebted to you for your last friendly, elegant epistle, and it shall make a part of the vanity of *my composition*, to retain your correspondence through life. It was remarkable your introducing the name of Miss Burnet, at a time when she was in such ill health; and I am sure it will grieve your gentle heart, to hear of her being in the last stage of a consumption. Alas! that so much beauty, innocence, and virtue, should be nipt in the bud. Hers was the smile of cheerfulness—of sensibility, not of allurement; and her elegance of manners corresponded with the purity and elevation of her mind.

How does your friendly muse? I am sure she still retains her affection for you, and that you have many of her favours in your possession, which I have not seen. I weary much to hear from you.

. . . . . .

I beseech you do not forget me.

. . . . . .

I most sincerely hope all your concerns in life prosper, and that your roof-tree enjoys the blessing of good health. All your friends here are well, among whom, and *not the least*, is your acquaintance, Cleghorn. As for myself, I am well, as far as . . . . . will let a man be; but with these I am happy.

. . . . . .

When you meet with my very agreeable friend J. Syme, give him for me a hearty squeeze, and bid, God bless him.

Is there any probability of your being soon in Edinburgh?

No. XCVIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

SIR, *Dumfries, Excise-Office, 14th July*, 1790.

COMING into town this morning, to attend my duty in this office, it being collection-day, I met with a gentleman who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death. I shall have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and

bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can; but let my letter be as stupid as . . . . ., as miscellaneous as a news-paper, as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law-paper in the Douglas' cause; as ill-spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byremucker's answer to it; I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, *Zeluco*. In fact, you are in some degree blamable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me, that nothing less would serve my over-weening fancy, than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet, in your different qualities and merits as novel-writers. This I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probable never bring the business to bear; but I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shows in the book of Job—"And I said, I will also declare my opinion." I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil, and marking with asterisks, parenthesis, &c. wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkable well turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I hardly think of fairly writing out my "Comparative View," I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are. I have just received from my gentleman, that horrid summons in the book of Revelations—"That time shall be no more!"

The little collection of sonnets have some charming poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs. Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

No. XCIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

DEAR MADAM, *8th of August*, 1790.

After a long day's toil, plague, and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long? It was owing to hurry, indolence, and fifty other things; in short, to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus amiable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best courtesy to me for this last compliment; as I pay it from sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you*, will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised to-day! A ci-devant friend of mine, and an intimate acquaintance of yours, has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride!

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

No. C.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 8th August, 1790.

FORGIVE me at once dear, and ever dear friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down, and fancy the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose feather to beat my brains for an apt simile, and had some thoughts of a country grannam at a family christening: a bride on the market-day before her marriage;

. . . . . .

a tavern-keeper at an election dinner; &c. &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best is, that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I choose (and who would not choose) to bind down with the crampets of attention, the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and from its daring turrets, bid defiance to the storm of fate. And is not this a "consummation devoutly to be wished?"

> "Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
> Lord of the lion-heart, and eagle-eye!
> Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
> Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!"

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of *Smollet's Ode to Independence.* If you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you. How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great. To shrink from every dignity of man, at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it as all men must a naked corse.*

No. CI.

FROM DR. BLACLOCK.

Edinburgh, 1st September, 1790.

How does my dear friend?—much I languish to hear,
His fortune, relations, and all that are dear;
With love of the Muses so strongly still smitten,
I meant this epistle in verse to have written;
But from age and infirmity, indolence flows,
And this, much I fear, will restore me to prose.
Anon to my business I wish to proceed,
Dr. Anderson guides and provokes me to speed,
A man of integrity, genius and worth,
Who soon a performance intends to set forth;
A work miscellanous, extensive, and free,
Which will weekly appear, by the name of the *Bee*
Of this from himself I inclose you a plan,
And hope you will give what assistance you can,

*The preceding letter explains the feelings under which this was written. The strain of indignant invective goes on some time longer in the style which our bard was too apt to indulge, and of which the reader has already seen so much.

Entangle with business, and haunted with care,
In which more or less human nature must share,
Some moments of leisure the Muses will claim,
A sacrifice due to amusement and fame.
The Bee, which sucks honey from ev'ry gay bloom.
With some rays of your genius her work may illume,
Whilst the flower whence her honey spontaneously flows,
As fragrantly smells, and as vig'rously grows.

Now with kind gratulation 'tis time to conclude,
And add, your promotion is here understood;
Thus free from the servile employ of excise, sir,
We hope soon to hear you commence supervisor;
You then more at leisure, and free from control,
May indulge the strong passion that reigns in your soul.
But I, feeble, I must to nature give way;
Devoted cold death's and longevity's prey.
From verses tho' languid my thoughts must unbend,
Tho' still I remain your affectionate friend,

THO. BLACKLOCK.

No CII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

FROM MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Edinburgh, 13th October, 1790.

I LATELY received a letter from our friend B———,—what a charming fellow lost to society—born to great expectations—with superior abilities, a pure heart, and untainted morals, his fate in life has been hard indeed—still I am persuaded he is happy; not like the gallant, the gay Lothario, but in the simplicity of rural enjoyment, unmixed with regret at the remembrance of "the days of other years."

I saw Mr. Dunbar put, under cover of your newspaper, Mr. Wood's Poem on Thomson. This Poem has suggested an idea to me which you alone are capable to execute:—a song adapted to *each* season of the year. The task is difficult, but the theme is charming; should you succeed, I will undertake to get new music worthy of the subject. What a fine field for your imagination, and who is there alive can draw so many beauties from Nature and pastoral imagery as yourself? It is, by the way, surprising that there does not exist, so far as I know, *a proper song* for each season. We have songs on hunting, fishing, skaiting, and one autumnal song, *Harvest Home.*—As your muse is neither spavied nor rusty, you may mount the hill of Parnassus, and return with a sonnet in your pocket for every season. For my suggestions, if I be rude, correct me; if impertinent, chastise me; if presuming, despise me. But if you blend all my weaknesses, and pound out one grain of insincerity, then am I not thy

Faithful friend, &c.

No. CIII.
TO MRS. DUNLOP.

November, 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance, I most cordially obey the apostle—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice"—for me to *sing* for joy is no new thing; but to *preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy.—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet, lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend. I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod, an instrument indispensably necessary, in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quicker and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith, to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere compliment to the sweet little fellow, than I, extempore almost, poured forth to him in the following verses. See the poem—*On the Birth of a Posthumous Child.*

. . . . . .

I am much pleased with your approbation of my *Tam o' Shanter*, which you express in your former letter, though, by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many; to all of which I plead *not guilty!* Your book is, I hear, on the road to reach me. As to printing of poetry, when you prepare it for the press, you have only to spell it right, and place the capital letters properly; as to the punctuation, the printers will do that themselves.

I have a copy of *Tam o' Shanter* ready to send by the first opportunity, it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favour me soon with an account of your good folks; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

No. CIV.
TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 23*d January*, 1791.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life, as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of Being!

I have just finished a poem, which you will receive inclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have, these several months, been hammering at an elegy for the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which please to give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set great value

on your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

. . . . . .

ELEGY

ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize,
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious death so triumph'd in a blow,
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

Thy form and mind, sweet maid, can I forget;
In richest ore the brightest jewel set!
In thee, high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by his noblest work the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves;
Thou crystal streamlet, with thy flowery shore;
Ye woodland choir that chaunt your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm; Eliza is no more.

Ye heathy wastes, inmix'd with reedy fens,
Ye mossy streams, with sedge and rushes stor'd,
Ye rugged cliffs, o'erhanging dreary glens,
To you I fly, ye with my soul accord.

Princes, whose cumb'rous pride was all their worth,
Shall venal lays their pompous exit hail;
And thou, sweet excellence! forsake our earth,
And not a muse in honest grief bewail.

We saw thee shine in youth and beauty's pride,
And virtue's light, that beams beyond the spheres;
But like the sun eclips'd at morning tide,
Thou left'st us darkling in a world of tears.

. . . . . .

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

No. CV.

TO MR. PETER HILL.

17th January, 1791.

Take these two guineas, and place them over against that ——— account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things as apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five! Not all the labours of Hercules; not all the Hebrews' three centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an ——— task! Poverty! thou half-sister of death, thou cousin-german of hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to the amplitude of thy demerits? Oppressed by thee, the venerable ancient, grown hoary in the practice of every virtue, laden with years and wretchedness, implores a little —little aid to support his existence, from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud; and is by him betrayed and insulted. Oppressed by thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence, and melts with sensi-

bility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes in bitterness of soul, under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. Oppressed by by thee, the son of genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see in suffering silence his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of worth that have reason to complain of thee: the children of folly and vice, though in common with thee, the offspring of evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition, and neglected education, is condemned as a fool for his dissipation, despised and shunned as a needy wretch, when his follies, as usual, bring him to want, and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country. But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early follies and extravagance, are spirit and fire; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he has gained a legal commission to plunder distant provinces, or massacre peaceful nations, he returns, perhaps, laden with the spoils of rapine and murder; lives wicked and respected, and dies a ——— and a lord.—Nay, worst of all, alas for helpless woman! the needy prostitute, who has shivered at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of carnal prostitution, is left neglected and insulted, ridden down by the chariot wheels of the coronetted RIP, hurrying on to the guilty assignation: she, too, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade.

Well! divines may say of it what they please, but execration is to the mind, what phlebotomy, is to the body; the vital sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations.

No. CVI.

FROM A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, 12th March*, 1791.

MR. HILL yesterday put into my hands a sheet of *Grose's Antiquities* containing a poem of yours, entitled *Tam o' Shanter*, a tale. The very high pleasure I have received from the perusal of the admirable piece, I feel, demands the warmest acknowledgments. Hill tells me he is to send off a packet for you this day; I cannot resist therefore putting on paper what I must have told you in person, had I met with you after the recent perusal of your tale, which is, that I feel I owe you a debt, which, if undischarged, would reproach me with ingratitude. I have seldom in my life tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius, than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken, if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation. In the introductory part, where you paint the character of your hero, and exhibit him at the ale-house *ingle*, with his tippling cronies, you have delineated nature with a humour and *naiveté*, that would do honour to Matthew Prior; but when you describe the unfortunate orgies of the witches' sabbath, and the hellish scenery

in which they are exhibited, you display a power of imagination, that Shakspeare himself could not have exceeded. I know not that I have ever met with a picture of more horrible fancy than the following:

> "Coffins stood round like open presses,
> That showed the dead in their last dresses:
> And by some devilish cantrip slight,
> Each in his cauld hand held a light."

But when I came to the succeeding lines, my blood ran cold within me:

> "A knife a father's throat had mangled,
> Whom his ain son of life bereft;
> The grey hairs yet stuck to the heft."

And here, after the two following lines, "Wi' mair o' horrible and awful'," &c. the descriptive part might perhaps have been better closed, than the four lines which succeed, which, though good in themselves, yet as they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror.* The initiation of the young witch is most happily described—the effect of her charms, exhibited in the dance, on Satan himself—the apostrophe—"Ah, little thought thy reverend grannie!"—the transport of Tam, who forgets his situation, and enters completely into the spirit of the scene, are all features of high merit, in this excellent composition. The only fault it possesses, is, that the winding up, or conclusion of the story, is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding part.—The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this, perhaps, you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale.

And now that I have got out my mind, and feel a little relieved of the weight of that debt I owed you, let me end this desultory scroll by an advice:—You have proved your talent for a species of composition, in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded—Go on—write more tales in the same style; you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for, with equal wit, equal power of numbers, and equal *naivete* of expression, you have a bolder, and more vigorous imagination.

I am, dear Sir, with much esteem,
Yours, &c.

No. CVII.

TO A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

SIR,

NOTHING less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgments for your letter. His own favourite poem, and that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were in the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt; to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most

* Our bard profitted by Mr. Tytler's criticism, and expunged the four lines accordingly.

delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart strings of a poor poet. However, providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there: one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce, it cannot easily be remedied. Your approbation, sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honour to be, &c.

No. CVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 7th February, 1791.

When I tell you, madam, that by a fall, not from my horse but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo. I had the honour of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragments, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected; 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows—

(Here follows the Elegy &c., adding this verse.)

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care!
So deckt the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So from it ravaged, leaves it bleak and bare.

. . . . . .

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your god-son, came safe. This last, madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the small-

pox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from,

Madam, yours, &c.

No. CIX.

TO LADY W. M. CONSTABLE.

ACKNOWLEDGING A PRESENT OF A VALUABLE SNUFF-BOX, WITH A FINE PICTURE OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, ON THE LID.

MY LADY,

Nothing less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller, from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your ladyship, I shall set it apart; the symbols of religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your ladyship; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary.

No. CX.

MRS. GRAHAM, OF FINTRY.

MADAM,

Whether it is that the story of our Mary, Queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have, in the inclosed ballad, succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past; on that account I inclose it particularly to you. It is true, the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr. G———'s goodness; and, what *in the usual ways of men*, is of infinitely greater importance, Mr. G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog; and however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor; but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty; and without any fustian affection of spirit, I can promise and affirm, that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart, and an independent mind. It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence; nor is it Mr. G———'s chiefest praise that he can command influence; but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman; and

I trust it shall be mine, to receive with thankfulness and remember with undiminished gratitude.

No. CXI.

FROM THE REV. G. BAIRD.

SIR, *London, 8th February,* 1791.

I TROUBLE you with this letter, to inform you that I am in hopes of being able very soon to bring to the press a new edition (long since talked of) of *Michael Bruce's Poems.* The profits of the edition are to go to his mother—a woman of eighty years of age—poor and helpless. The poems are to be published by subscription; and it may be possible I think, to make out a 2*s.* 6*d.* or 3*s.* volume, with the assistance of a few hitherto unpublished verses, which I have got from the mother of the poet.

But the design I have in view in writing to you, is not merely to inform you of these facts, it is to solicit the aid of your name and pen in support of the scheme. The reputation of Bruce is already high with every reader of classical taste, and I shall be anxious to guard against tarnishing his character, by allowing any new poems to appear that may lower it. For this purpose, the MSS. I am in possession of, have been submitted to the revision of some whose critical talents I can trust to, and I mean still to submit them to others.

May I beg to know, therefore, if you will take the trouble of perusing the MSS.—of giving your opinion, and suggesting what curtailments, alterations, or amendments, occur to you as advisable? And will you allow us to let it be known, that a few lines by you will be added to the volume?

I know the extent of this request.—It is bold to make it. But I have this consolation, that though you see it proper to refuse it, you will not blame me for having made it; you will see my apology in the *motive.*

May I just add, that Michael Bruce is one in whose company, from his past appearance, you would not, I am convinced, blush to be found; and as I would submit every line of his that should now be published, to your own criticisms, you would be assured that nothing derogatory either to him or you would be admitted in that appearance he may make in future.

You have already paid an honourable tribute to kindred genius in Fergusson—I fondly hope that the mother of Bruce will experience your patronage.

I wish to have the subscription papers circulated by the 14th of March, Bruce's birth-day; which, I understand, some friends in Scotland talk this year of observing—at that time it will be resolved, I imagine, to place a plain humble stone over his grave. This, at least, I trust you will agree to do—to furnish, in a few couplets, an *inscription* for it.

On these points may I solicit an answer as early as possible; a short delay might disappoint us in procuring that relief to the mother, which is the object of the whole.

You will be pleased to address for me under cover to the Duke of Athole, London.

* * * * *

P. S.—Have you ever seen an engraving published here some time ago from one of your poems, "*O thou pale Orb.*" If you have not, I shall have the pleasure of sending it to you.

No CXII.

TO THE REV. G. BAIRD.

IN ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING.

Why did you, my dear sir, write to me in such a hesitating style, on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter had my direction so as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should directly have put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask, that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear, that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings (any body but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation,) that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection.

* * * * * *

No. CXIII.

TO DR. MOORE.

Ellisland, 28th February, 1791.

I do not know, sir, whether you are a subscriber to *Grose's Antiquities of Scotland.* If you are, the inclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view; it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard; and also of showing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on Captain Henderson,* is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as the Roman Catholics; they can be of service to their friends after they have past that bourne where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forget where in Scripture, says, "whatsoever is not of

faith, is sin;" so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with "Percy's Reliques of English Poetry." By the way, how much is every honest heart, which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice obliged to you for your glorious story of Buchanan and Targe. 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving Targe the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.

* * * * *

I have just read over, once more of many times, your "Zeluco." I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one, or two, I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson indeed might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper minds.

As to my private concerns, I am going on a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence; so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog, you know, has his day), my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life as I could wish, I shall, if I am favoured so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors, this is one of the best, *Better be the head of the commonalty, as the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject, which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you; so I shall give you a short poem

on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honour to be, yours, &c.

. . . . . .

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of *The Red Rose.*

No. CXIV.

FROM DR. MOORE.

DEAR SIR, *London, 29th March,* 1791.

Your letter of the 28th of February I received only two days ago, and this day I had the pleasure of waiting on the Rev. Mr. Baird, at the Duke of Athole's, who had been so obliging as to transmit it to me, with the printed verses on *Alloway Church, the Elegy on Capt. Henderson,* and the *Epitaph.* There are many poetical beauties in the former: what I particularly admire are the three striking similes from

'Or like the snow falls in the river.'

and the eight lines which begin with

'By this time he was cross the ford;'

so exquisitely expressive of the superstitious impressions of the country. And the twenty-two lines from

"Coffins stood round like open presses,"

which, in my opinion, are equal to the ingredients of Shakspeare's cauldron in *Macbeth.*

As for the *Elegy,* the chief merit of it consists in the very graphic description of the objects belonging to the country in which the poet writes, and which none but a Scottish poet could have described, and none but a real poet, and a close observer of Nature, could have *so* described.

. . . . . .

There is something original, and to me wonderfully pleasing in the *Epitaph.*

I remember you once hinted before, what you repeat in your last, that you had made some remarks on *Zeluco,* on the margin. I should be very glad to see them, and regret you did not send them before the last edition, which is just published. Pray transcribe them for me. I sincerely value your opinion very highly, and pray do not suppress one of those in which you *censure* the sentiment or expression. Trust me it will break no squares between us—I am not akin to the Bishop of Grenada.

I must now mention what has been on my mind for some time; I cannot help thinking you imprudent in scattering abroad so many copies of your verses. It is most natural to give a few to confidential friends, particularly to those who are connected with the subject, or who are perhaps themselves the subject, but this ought to be done under promise not to give other copies. Of the poem you sent me on Queen Mary, I refused every solicitation for copies, but I lately saw it in a newspaper. My motive for cautioning you on this subject is, that I wish to engage you to collect all your fugitive

pieces, not already printed, and after they have been re-considered, and polished to the utmost of your power, I would have you to publish them by another subscription; in promoting of which I will exert myself with pleasure.

In your future compositions, I wish you would use the modern English. You have shown your powers in Scottish sufficiently. Although in certain subjects it gives additional zest to the humour, yet it is lost to the English; and why should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole.

If you chance to write to my friend Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, I beg to be affectionately remembered to her. She must not judge of the warmth of my sentiments respecting her, by the number of my letters; I hardly ever write a line but on business: and I do not know that I should have scribbled all this to you, but for the business-part, that is, to instigate you to a new publication; and to tell you that when you think you have a sufficient number to make a volume, you should set your friends on getting subscriptions. I wish I could have a few hours' conversation with you—I have many things to say which I cannot write. If I ever go to Scotland, I will let you know, that you may meet me at your own house, or my friend Mrs. Hamilton's, or both.

Adieu, my dear Sir, &c.

No. CXV.

TO THE REV. ARCH. ALISON.

SIR, *Ellisland, near Dumfries, 14th Feb.*, 1791.

You must, by this time, have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honour to present me with a book which does honour to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up forsooth a deep learned digest of strictures on a composition, of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, sir, that at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic and sublime, than the twingle twangle of a Jews' harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all association of ideas:—these I set down as irrefragible, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith.—In short, sir, except *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evening of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas as your "*Essays on the Principles of Taste.*" One thing, sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon

merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I inclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale.

I am, Sir, &c.

No. CXVI.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

12th March, 1791.

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have just composed, always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an author will ever view his own works. I believe, in general, novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced, in the revolution of many a hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my parish priest, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition, which will appear, perhaps, in Johnson's work, as well as the former.

You must know a beautiful Jacobite air, *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.* When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets.

. . . . .

By yon castle wa', at the close of the day,
I heard a man sing, though his head it was grey;
And as he was singing, the tears fast down came—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

The church is in ruins, the state is in jars,
Delusions, oppressions, and murderous wars:
We dare na' weel say't, but we ken wha's to blame—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

My seven brave sons for Jamie drew sword,
And now I greet round their green beds in the yerd;
It brack the sweet heart o' my faithfu' auld dame—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

Now life is a burden that bows me down,
Sin' I tint my bairns, and he tint his crown;
But 'till my last moment my words are the same—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

. . . . .

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past," to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have subscribed on 'till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

"That hour o' night's black arch the key-stane."

So good-night to you! Sound be your sleep, and delectable your dreams! A propos, how do you like this thought in a ballad, I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west, when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be:
For far in the west is he I lo'e best—
The lad that is dear to my baby and me!

. . . . . .

Good night, once more, and God bless you!

No. CXVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 11th April, 1791.

I am once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday last, Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy; rather stouter but not so handsome as your god-son was at his time of life. Indeed, I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o' Shanter* to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might, perhaps, be as well spared; but then, they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather.* We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is, indeed, such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine; we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence—as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unconscious of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world;—and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return; these, with a healthy frame, a sound vigorous constitution, which your high ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do, let me hear by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May Almighty Goodness preserve and restore him!

No. CXVIII
TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

11*th June*, 1791.

Let me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman, who waits on you with this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the · · · · · of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to · · · · · that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of sensibility and genius, and such is my friend Clarke, when a booby father presents him with his booby son, and insists on lightening up the rays of science, in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel; a fellow whom, in fact, it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the Almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat school are, the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh, and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius and worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistracy and council, · · · · · · · · · · but particularly, you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honour of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honour to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.* I tell him, through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronage. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and say it, that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and · · · · · God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often, alas! almost unexceptionably, received by their friends with disrespect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts, rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship, which in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out those failings, and apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by virtues if you please, but do, also, spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude,

* Dr. Robertson was uncle to Mr. Cunningham.

must be incident to human nature, do thou, fortune, put it in my power, always from myself, and of myself, to bear the consequences of those errors. I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend, Mr. Clarke, to your acquaintance and good offices; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other. I long much to hear from you. Adieu.

No. CXIX.

FROM THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

Dryburgh Abbey, 17th June, 1791.

Lord Buchan has the pleasure to invite Mr. Burns to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on Ednam Hill, on the 22nd of September; for which day perhaps his muse may inspire an ode suited to the occasion. Suppose Mr. Burns should, leaving the Nith, go across the country, and meet the Tweed at the nearest point from his farm—and, wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent stream, catch inspiration on the devious walk, till he finds Lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh. There the commendator will give him a hearty welcome, and try to light his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue. This poetical perambulation of the Tweed, is a thought of the late Sir Gilbert Elliot's and of Lord Minto's, followed out by his accomplished grandson, the present Sir Gilbert, who, having been with Lord Buchan lately, the project was renewed, and will, they hope, be executed in the manner proposed.

No. CXX.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

My Lord,

Language sinks under the ardour of my feelings, when I would thank your lordship for the honour you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm in reading the card you did me the honour to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired—I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your lordship, with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, &c.

. . . . . .

No. CXXI.
FROM THE SAME.

Dryburgh Abbey, 18th September, 1791.

SIR,

YOUR address to the shade of Thomson has been well received by the public; and though I should disapprove of your allowing Pegassus to ride with you off the field of your honourable and useful profession, yet I cannot resist an impulse which I feel at this moment to suggest to your muse, *Harvest Home,* as an excellent subject for her grateful song, in which the peculiar aspect and manners of our country might furnish an excellent portrait and landscape of Scotland, for the employment of happy moments of leisure and recess, from your more important occupations.

Your *Halloween,* and *Saturday Night,* will remain to distant posterity as interesting pictures of rural innocence and happiness in your native country, and were happily written in the dialect of the people; but *Harvest Home* being suited to descriptive poetry, except where colloquial, may escape disguise of a dialect which admits of no elegance or dignity of expression. Without the assistance of any god or goddess, and without the invocation of any foreign muse, you may convey in epistolary form the description of a scene so gladdening and picturesque, with all the concomitant local position, landscape and costume; contrasting the peace, improvement, and happiness of the borders of the once hostile nations of Britain, with their former oppression and misery, and showing, in lively and beautifnl colours, the beauties and joys of a rural life. And as the unvitiated heart is naturally disposed to overflow in gratitude in the moment of prosperity, such a subject would furnish you with an amiable opportunity of perpetuating the names of Glencairn, Miller, and your other eminent benefactors; which from what I know of your spirit, and have seen of your poems and letters, will not deviate from the chastity of praise, that is so uniformly united to true taste and genius. I am, Sir, &c.

No. CXXII.
TO LADY CUNNINGHAM.

MY LADY,

I WOULD, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed ME, of sending you any thing I compose in the poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make that the first piece I should do myself the honour of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the enclosed had been much more worthy of your perusal; as it is I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late Earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows with the most grateful sense of rememberance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honour to wear to his lordship's memory were not the "mockery of woe." Nor shall my gratitude perish with me:—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honour, and a family

debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn!

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other give it to the world.*

. . . . . .

No. CXXIII.

TO MR. AINSLIE.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

Can you minister to a mind diseased? Can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, head-ache, nausea, and all the d——d hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch, who has been guilty of the sin of drunkeness—can you speak to the troubled soul?

Miserable perdu that I am, I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain; here must I sit a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every chick of the clock as it slowly—slowly numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who d—n them, are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's backside, and every one with a burthen of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow.—When I tell you even . . has lost his power to please, yon will guess something of my hell within, and all around me—I began *Elibanks and Eibraes*, but the stanza fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue; at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours, that lay by me in my book-case, and I felt something for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.——Well—I begin to breathe a little, since I began to write you. How are you and what are you doing? How goes law? Appropos, for connection's sake do not address me supervisor, for that in an honour I cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a supervisor, and will be called out by and bye to act one; but at present, I am a simple guager, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 *per ann.* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 *per ann.*

. . . . . .

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know.

. . . . . .

No. CXXIV.

FROM SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

SIR, *Near Maybole, 16th October*, 1791.

Accept of my thanks for your favour with the *Lament* on the death of my much esteemed friend, and your worthy patron, the perusal

* The poem inclosed, is "The Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn."

of which pleased and affected me much. The lines addressed to me are very flattering.

I have always thought it most natural to suppose, (and a strong argument in favour of a future existence) that when we see an honourable and virtuous man labouring under bodily infirmities, and oppressed by the frowns of fortune in this world, that there was a happier state beyond the grave; where that worth and honour which were neglected here, would meet with their just reward, and where temporal misfortunes would receive an eternal recompense. Let us cherish this hope for our departed friend; and moderate our grief for that loss we have sustained; knowing that he cannot return to us, but we may go to him.

Remember me to your wife, and with every good wish for the prosperity of you and your family, believe me at all times,

Your most sincere friend,

JOHN WHITEFOORD.

No. CXXV.

FROM A. F. TYTLER, ESQ.

Edinburgh, 27th Nov. 1791.

You have much reason to blame me for neglecting till now to acknowledge the receipt of a most agreeable packet, containing *The Whistle,* a ballad; and *The Lament;* which reached me about six weeks ago in London, from whence I am just returned. Your letter was forwarded to me there from Edinburgh, where, as I observed by the date, it had lain for some days. This was an additional reason for me to have answered it immediately on receiving it; but the truth was, the bustle of business, engagements and confusion of one kind or another, in which I found myself immersed all the time I was in London, absolutely put it out of my power. But to have done with apologies, let me now endeavour to prove myself in some degree deserving of the very flattering compliment you pay me, by giving you at least a frank and candid, if it should not be a judicious criticism on the poems you sent me.

The ballad of *The Whistle* is, in my opinion, truly excellent. The old tradition which you have taken up is the best adapted for a Bacchanalian composition of any I have ever met with, and you have done it full justice. In the first place, the strokes of wit arise naturally from the subject, and are commonly happy. For example,—

> 'The hands grew the tighter the more they were wet
>
> 'Cynthia hinted she'd find them next morn.'
>
> 'Though Fate said a hero should perish in light,
> So up rose bright Phœbus and down fell the knight.'

In the next place, you are singularly happy in the discrimination of your heroes, and in giving each the sentiments and language suitable to his character. And, lastly, you have much merit in the delicacy of the panegyric which you have contrived to throw on each of the *dramatis personæ,* perfectly appropriate to his character. This compliment to Sir Robert, the blunt soldier, is peculiarly fine. In short, this composition, in my opinion, does you great honour,

and I see not a line or a word in it which I could wish to be altered.

As to *The Lament*, I suspect, from some expressions in your letter to me, that you are more doubtful with respect to the merits of this piece than of the other, and I own I think you have reason; for although it contains some beautiful stanzas, as the first, "The wind blew hollow," &c. the fifth, "Ye scatter'd birds;" the thirteenth, "Awake thy last sad voice," &c. Yet it appears to me faulty as a whole, and inferior to several of those you have already published in the same strain. My principal objection lies against the plan of the piece. I think it was unnecessary and improper to put the lamentation in the mouth of a fictitious character, an *aged bard*.—It had been much better to have lamented your patron in your own person, to have expressed your genuine feelings for his loss, and to have spoken the language of nature rather than that of fiction on the subject. Compare this with your poem of the same title in your printed volume, which begins, *O thou pale Orb!* and observe what it is that forms the charm of that composition. It is, that it speaks the language of *truth* and of *nature*. The change is, in my opinion, injudicious too in this respect, that an *aged* bard has much less need of a patron and protector than a *young* one. I have thus given you, with much freedom, my opinion of both the pieces. I should have made a very ill return to the compliment you paid me, if I had given you any other than my genuine sentiments.

It will give me great pleasure to hear from you when you find leisure, and I beg you will believe me ever, dear Sir, yours, &c.

No. CXXVI.

TO MISS DAVIES.

It is impossible, madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind, can have any idea of that moral disease under which I unhappily must rank as the chief of sinners; I mean a torpitude of the moral powers that may be called, a lethargy of conscience.—In vain remorse rears her horrent crest, and rouses all her snakes; beneath the deadly fixed eye and leaden hand of indolence, their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss D——'s fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes; that to make her the subject of a silly ballad, is downright mockery of these ardent feelings; 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest, impotent and ineffectual—as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—"Go, be happy! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hand are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there!

ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt; and largely impart that happiness to others, which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow!"

Why, dear madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love!—Out upon the world! say I, that its affairs are administered so ill? They talk of reform;—good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men!—Down, immediately, should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow.—As for a much more formidable class, the knaves, I am at a loss what to do with them: Had I a world, there should not be a knave in it.

* * * * *

But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill; and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of his life are, among men, comparatively tolerable—but there is a delicacy, in tenderness. accompanying every view in which we can place lovely Woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of fortune. Women is the blood-royal of life: let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be ALL sacred. Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable; it is an original component feature of my mind.

. . . . . .

No. CXXVII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1791.

MANY thanks to you, madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

. . . . . .

SCENE,—*A field of battle—time of the day, evening—the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following*

SONG OF DEATH.

FAREWELL, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad setting sun;

Farewell, loves and friendships; ye dear, tender ties,
Our race of existence is run!

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go frighten the coward and slave;
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know,
No terror hast thou to the brave!

Thou strik'st the poor peasant—he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name:
Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame!

In the field of proud honour—our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands—
O, who would not die with the brave!

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was, looking over, with a musical friend, M'Donald's collection of Highland airs; I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig*, or *The Song of Death*, to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which ere yon full orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old mother earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende!*

No. CXXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

5th January, 1792.

You see my hurried life, madam; I can only command starts of time; however, I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the Board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you, that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now, as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to —— but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabbings. What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another. For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of D——, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him, and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife, and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin!

Your cup, my dear madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality,

produced my whigmeleerie cup, and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm, that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and by and bye, never did your great ancestor lay a *Southron* more completely to rest than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours wherever they are scattered over the earth!

No. CXXIX.

TO MR. WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER.

Dumfries, 22d January, 1792.

I SIT down, my dear sir, to introduce a young lady to you, and a lady in the first ranks of fashion too. What a task! to you—who care no more for the herd of animals called young ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foregoing of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddel, who will take this letter to town with her and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses: and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady-poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book, and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing, a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself;—where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning *compliments of the season*, but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers, that FORTUNE may never throw your SUBSISTENCE to the mercy of a KNAVE, or set your CHARACTER on the judgment of a FOOL, but that, upright and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say, here lies a man who did honour to science; and men of worth shall say, here lies a man who did honour to human nature!

No. CXXX.

TO MR. W. NICHOL.

29th February, 1792.

O THOU, wisest among the wise, meredian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of proverbs and master of maxims, that antipode of folly, and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer's sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills?* As for him, his works are perfect never did the pen of calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of hatred fly at his dwelling.

* * * *

Thou mirror of purity, when shall the elphine lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers.—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of the sky-descended and heaven-bound desires; never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid.—May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of wisdom and mirror of morality! thy devoted slave.†

† This strain of irony was excited by a letter of Mr. Nicol's containing good advice.

No. CXXXI.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

3d March, 1792.

SINCE I wrote to you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you farther. When I say that I had not time, that, as

* Mr. Nichol.

usual, means, that the three demons, indolence, business, and ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them, as not to leave me a five minutes fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I dare say he thinks I have used him unkindly, and I must own with too much appearance of truth. Apropos, do you know the much admired old Highland air called *The Sutor's Dochter*? It is a first-rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung with great applause in some fashionable circles by Major Robertson, of Lade, who was here with his corps.

. . . . . .

There is one commisson that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much. I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles, which I fancy would make a very decent one; and I want to cut my armorial bearing on it; will you be so obliging as inquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all; but I have invented arms for myself, so you know I shall be chief of the name; and by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These, however, I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald; and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper: for crest, two mottoes, round the top of the crest, *Wood notes wild.* At the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield.* By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcada; but a *Stock and Horn*, and a *Cuib*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the *Gentle Shepherd.* By the bye, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius.—Why is he not more known?—Has he no patrons? or do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world, and dear as it was, I mean dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it; but I was told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral costume. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and harden the heart so? I think were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man, in his native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the idea of such merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob or governor-contractor possesses, and why they do not form a mutual league. Let wealth shelter and cherish unprotected merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay it.

. . . . . .

No. CXXXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Annan Water Foot, 22nd August, 1792.

Do NOT blame me for it, madame—my own conscience, hackneyed and weather-beaten as it is, in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c. has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently.

. . . . . .

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favours: to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure of progressive increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much beloved friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they posssibly can.

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain,) do you know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word, Love, owing to the *interminglédoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting, and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss L— B—, your neighbour at M——. Mr. B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G. passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honour of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time,) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think that you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with

'My bonnie Lizzie Baillie
I'll row thee in my pladie,'

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, "unanointed unannealed," as Halet says.—See the poem.

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a-year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great "evil under the sun," which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in

his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that "we meet to part no more."

. . . . . .

'Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!'

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. "O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!"—but it cannot be; you and I, my friend, may make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only neccessary, by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little god-son, and every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

No. CXXXIII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Dumfries, 10th September, 1792.

No! I will not attempt an apology.—Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the face of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the excise; making ballads, and then drinking, and singing them; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications; still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour near "witching time of night"—and scrawled a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian archers for the honour they have done (though to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both long ere now.) Well, then, here is to your good health! for you must know, I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just by way of spell, to keep away the meikle horned Deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you?—"The voice said cry," and I said "what shall I cry?"—O, thou spirit! whatever thou art, or whenever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the faulde! Be thou a brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose—Be thou a kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry, in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm, and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling

boat!—Or, lastly, be thou a ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of thy time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee; or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, pourtraying on his dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Diety!—Come, thou spirit, but not in those horrid forms; come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the tete of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light horse gallop of clishmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth putting pen to paper for.

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance! circled in the embrace of my elbow chair, my breast labours, like the bloated Sybil on her three-footed stool, and like her too, labours with Nonsense.—Nonsense, auspicious name! Tutor, friend, and finger-post in the mystic mazes of law; the cadaverous paths of physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of SCHOOL DIVINITY, who leaving Common Sense confounded at his strength of pinion, Reason delirious with eying his giddy flight, and Truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of Theologic Vision—raves abroad on all the winds. "On earth Discord! a gloomy Heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!" —O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of a man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres miserable,* to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted! "'Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world;" so, alas! the experience of the poor and the needy too often affirms; and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to *one,* by the dogmas of ———, that you will be damned in the world to come!

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful: but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence, and a foot-spurning filth, in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled · · ·

again—this rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos! how do you like,—I mean *really* like the married life? Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of his institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you *my* ideas of the conjugal state—(*en passant*, you know I am no Latinist, is not *conjugal* derived from *jugum*, a yoke)? Well, then, the scale of good-wifeship I divide into ten parts.—Good-nature, four; Good Sense, two; Wit, one; Personal charms, viz., a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage, (I would add a fine waist, too, but that is so soon spoilt, you know), all these, one; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on, a wife, such as Fortune, Connexions, Education, (I mean Education extraordinary,) Family Blood, &c., divide the two remaining degrees among them as you please; only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in the aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with Miss L——B ——, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God, in such an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas make a part—

Thou, bonnie L——, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonnie L——, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very Deil he could na scaith
Whatever wad belang thee!
He'd look into thy bonnie face
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

—behold all these things are written in the chronicles of my imagination, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom*-companion, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benignest influence of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

No. CXXXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 24th September, 1792.

I HAVE this moment, my dear madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c. are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs H——'s situation. Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman— in a strange, foreign land and that land convulsed with every horror, that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter

but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: he who wounded (he only can) may He heal !*

. . . . . .

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. . . . . I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness; knowing that none can say unto him, "what dost thou?"—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but Devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat.

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified, as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs B——, until her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriachal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let me have them on the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to show a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am poor; a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little god-son is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I never saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his school-master.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart; you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

No. CXXXV.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ON THE DEATH OF MRS. H——, HER DAUGHTER.

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend! I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—*children of affliction!*—how just the expression! and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, madam! who would wish for many years? What is it but to drag on existence until our joys gradually expire and leave us in a night of misery; like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us, without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

* This much-lamented lady was gone to the south of France with her infaint son, where she died soon after.

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

No. CXXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 6th December, 1792.

I SHALL be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and, if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, madam! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper, that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind, makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehensions for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals? Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, "careless of the voice of the morning;" and now not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both my "staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition, Mrs. B. having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora*.

> "The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer—
> Or what need he regard his single woes?" &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas! too peculiarly apposite, my dear madam, to your present frame of mind:

> "Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him,
> With his fair weather virtue, that exults
> Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes,
> The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
> This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies,
> Lamenting—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
> How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favourite one, from his *Alfred*,

> "Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life; to life itself,
> With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

Probably they have quoted some of these to you formerly, as in deed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such re petitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am

almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion—speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says,

"'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright," &c.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican spirit of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am a *placeman*, you know; a very humble one indeed, Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter.

. . . . .

I have taken up the subject in another view; and the other day, for a pretty actress's benefit-night, I wrote an address, which I will give you on the other page, called *The Rights of Woman*.

. . . . .

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

An Occasional Address spoken by MISS FONTENELLE *on her benefit night.*

WHILE Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things,
The fate of empires and the fall of kings,
While Quacks of state must each produce his plan,
And even children lisp the Rights of Man;
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention,
The Rights of Woman merit some attention.

First, in the sexes' intermix'd connexion,
One sacred Right of Woman is protection.
The tender flower that lifts its head, elate,
Helpless, must fall before the blast of fate,
Sunk to the earth, defaced its lovely form,
Unless your shelter ward th' impending storm.—

Our second Right's—but needless here is caution,
To keep that right inviolate's the fashion,
Each man of sense has it so full before him,
He'd die before he'd wrong it—'tis decorum.—
There was, indeed, in far less polish'd days,
A time, when rough rude men had naughty ways;
Would swagger, swear, get drunk, kick up a riot,
Nay, even thus invade a lady's quiet.—
Now, thank our stars! these Gothic times are fled:
Now, well-bred men—and you are all well-bred—
Most justly think (and we are much the gainers)
Such conduct neither spirit, wit, nor manners.

For Right the third, our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest,
Which even the Rights of Kings in low prostration
Most humbly own—'tis dear, dear admiration
In that blest sphere alone we live and move;
There taste that life of life—immortal love—
Smiles, glances, sighs, tears, fits, flirtations, airs,
'Gainst such an host what flinty savage dares—
When awful Beauty joins with all her charms
Who is so rash as rise in rebel arms?

But truce with kings, and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments and revolutions,
Let majesty your first attention summon,
Ah! ca ira! THE MAJESTY OF WOMAN!

I shall have the honour of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop.

No. CXXXVI.

TO MISS B——, OF YORK.

MADAM, 21*st March*, 1793.

Among many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the flood, is this in particular, that when they met with any body after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as the miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings, and jostlings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the powers of darkness, I take those to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the devil. It is well known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts, and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments respecting Miss B——; how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss H—— tells me that she is sending a packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the inclosed sonnet, though to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honour to be, &c.

No. CXXXVIII.

TO MISS C——.

MADAM, *August*, 1793.

Some rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented me doing myself the honour of a second visit to Arbiegland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done.—However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I inclose you two of my late pieces, as some kind return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MS. volume of poems in the possession of Captain Riddel. To repay one with an *old song*, is a proverb, whose force you, madam, I know will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poetry; none ever despised it who had pretensions to it.

The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not, among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets.—In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how

they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as, arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the path of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living, for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet. To you, madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poetry is like bewitching woman; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy, and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin; yet where is the man but must own that all happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisaical bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun, rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures that we owe to the lovely Queen of the heart of Man!

No. CXXXIX.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

SIR, *December*, 1793.

It is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man.—Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty, dog's ear'd like pages,* I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under, the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itrelf was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scotch songs I have for some years been making: I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I shall be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

* Scottish bank-notes.

No. CXL.

TO MRS. R——,

WHO WAS TO BESPEAK A PLAY ONE EVENING AT THE DUMFRIES THEATRE.

I AM thinking to send my *Address* to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction, so pray look over it.

As to the Tuesday's play, let me beg of you, my dear madam, let me beg of you to give us, *The Wonder, a Woman keeps a Secret;* to which please add, *The Spoiled Child*—you will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed gloomy blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits—

> "To play the shapes
> Of frolic fancy, and incesant form
> Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
> Of fleet ideas, never join'd before,
> Where lively wit excites to gay surprise;
> Or folly, painting humour, grave himself,
> Calls laughter forth, deep-shaking every nerve.

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend.

No. CXLI.

TO A LADY.

IN FAVOUR OF A PLAYER'S BENEFIT.

MADAM,

YOU were so very good as to promise to honour my friend with your presence on his benefit night. That night is fixed for Friday first: the play a most instructing one! *The way to keep Him.* I have the pleasure to know Mr. G. well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has a genius and worth which would do honour to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which, from their very *silence,* have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas! for pity! that, from the indolence of those who have the good things of this life in gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring, humble want! Of all the qualities we assign to the author and director of Nature, by far the most enviable is—to be able "To wipe away all tears from all eyes." O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums,* with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy!

But I crave your pardon, madam; I came to beg, not to preach.

No. CXLII.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

TO MR. ——.

1794.

I AM extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests, in a letter which Mr. S—— showed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisor's

list: and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*—then a Friend might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I like. A supervisor's income varies from about one hundred and twenty to two hundred a-year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a-year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me, to say that I do not need or would not be indebted to a political friend; at the same time, sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, too hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I will petition your goodness with the same frankness and sincerity as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself, &c.

No. CXLIII.

TO MRS. ——.

DEAR MADAM,

I MEANT to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view, was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday, when we may arrange the business of the visit.

* * *

Among the profusion of idle compliments which insidious craft, or unmeaning folly incessantly offers at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of my heart, and an independent mind; and to assure, you, that I am, thou most amiable, and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem, and regard, thine, &c.

No. CXLIV.

TO THE SAME

I WILL wait on you, my ever-valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a specie of the human genus that I call *the gin-horse class;* what enviable dogs they are. Round, and round, and round they go,—Mundell's ox that drives his cotton mill, is their exact prototype—without an

idea beyond their circle: fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d— melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—"And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper." If my resentment is awakened, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak; and if—

. . . . .

Pray that wisdom and bliss be more frequent visitors of

R. B.

No. CXLV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this moment got the song from S——, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him any thing again.

I have sent you *Werter*, truly happy to have any the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

'Tis true, madam, I saw you once since I was at W—; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak on it.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs. —— a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly, than any man whom I have seen approach her.

No. CXLVI.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it, even perhaps while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *any thing* estrange me from a friend such as you?—No! To-morrow I shall have the honour of waiting upon you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women; even with all thy little caprices!

No. CXLVII.

TO THE SAME.

MADAM,

I RETURN your common-place book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that "offences come only from the heart," before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect, and contemptuous scorn—is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good luck; that while *de-haut en-bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem, and ardent regard for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss, I have the honour to be, madam, your most devoted humble servant.

No. CXLVIII.

TO JOHN SYME, ESQ.

You know that among other high dignities, you have the honour to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I inclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honour to call my acquaintances, the O—— family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr. O's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman. Did you ever my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr. O.? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and ingenious upright mind, and that informed too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune; and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying any thing adequate: in my song, I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I in my first fervour thought of sending it to Mrs. O——, but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors.*

No. CXLIX.

TO MISS ——.

MADAM,

Nothing short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem

* The song inclosed was the one beginning with

"O wat ye wha's in yon town."

for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have past with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connexions! The wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world; and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight!

These, madam, are sensations of no ordinary anguish.—However, you, also, may be offended with some *imputed* improprieties of mine; sensibility you know I possess, and sincerity none will deny me.

To oppose those prejudices which have been raised against me, is not the business of this letter. Indeed it is a warfare I know not how to wage. The powers of positive vice I can in some degree calculate, and against direct malevolence I can be on my guard; but who can estimate the fatuity of giddy caprice, or ward off the unthinking mischief of precipitate folly?

I have a favour to request of you, madam, and of your sister Mrs. ——, through your means. You know, that, at the wish of my late friend, I made a collection of all my trifles in verse which I had ever written. They are many of them local, some of them puerile, and silly, and all of them unfit for the public eye. As I have some little fame at stake, a fame that I trust may live, when the hate of those who "watch for my halting," and the contumelious sneer of those whom accident has made my superiors, will, with themselves, be gone to the regions of oblivion; I am uneasy now for the fate of those manuscripts.—Will Mrs. —— have the goodness to destroy them or return them to me? As a pledge of friendship they were bestowed; and that circumstance, indeed, was all their merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit they no longer possess, and I hope that Mrs. ——'s goodness, which I well know, and ever will revere, will not refuse this favour to a man whom she once held in some degree of estimation.

With the sincerest esteem I have the honour to be, madam, &c.

No. CL.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

Canst thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tossed on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a fame, tremblingly alive to the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries, with thy inquiries after me?

. . . . . .

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a num-

ber of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these —— times; losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still there are two great pillars that bear us up, amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments, which, however, the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to, those awful obscure realities—and all-powerful and equally beneficient God; and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field;—the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY; or at most as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know any thing of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow who is now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him, wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoying the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift, delighting degrees, is wrapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson.—

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God.—The rolling year
> Is full of thee."

And so on, in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures; they are real delights, and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say, equal

to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.

No. CLI.

To ———.

SUPPOSES HIMSELF TO BE WRITING FROM THE DEAD TO THE LIVING.

MADAM,

I DARE say this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world. I write you from the regions of Hell, amid the horrors of the damned. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know; as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion; but on my arrival here, I was fairly tried and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine, for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days; and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclining on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel, his name, I think, is *Recollection*, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology.—Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, madam, I have much to apologize. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss I—— too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners—do make, on my part, a miserable d—d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs. G——, a charming woman, did me the honour to be prejudiced in my favour; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness.—To all the other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but—

. . . . . .

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, madam, your humble slave.

No. CLII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MY DEAR FRIEND, *15th December*, 1795.

As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall now drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies, for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathize in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate; even in all the vigour of manhood as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune.—A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

"O that I had ne'er been married,
I would never had na care,
Now I've gotten wife and bairns,
They cry, crowdie, evermair,
Crowdie! ance; crowdie! twice;
Crowdie! three times in a day:
An ye crowdie ony mair,
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away."

. . . . . .

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here, this season; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country, *want of cash.* I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional *Address*, which I wrote for the benefit-night of one of the actresses, and which is as follows:—

ADDRESS.

Spoken by MISS FONTENELLE *on her benefit-night, Dec.* 4, 1795, *at the Theatre, Dumfries.*

STILL anxious to secure your partial favour,
And not less anxious, sure, this night than ever,
A Prologue, Epilogue, or some such matter,
'Twould vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better;
So, sought a Poet, roosted near the skies,
Told him, I came to feast my curious eyes;
Said, nothing like his works was ever printed;
And last, my prologue-business slily hinted,—

"Ma'am, let me tell you," quoth my man of rhymes;
"I know your bent—these are no laughing times,
Can you—but Miss, I own I have my fears,
Dissolve in pause—and sentimental tears—
With laden sighs, and solemn rounded sentence,
Rouse from his sluggish slumbers fell Repentance;
Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand
Waving on high the desolating brand,
Calling the storms to bear him o'er a guilty land!"

I could no more—askance the creature eyeing,
D'ye think, said I, this face was made for crying?
I'll laugh, that's poz—nay, more, the world shall know it;
And so, your servant—gloomy Master Poet.

Firm as my creed, sirs, 'tis my fixed belief,
That Misery's another word for Grief:
I also think—so may I be a bride!
That so much laughter, so much life enjoy'd—

Thou man of crazy care and ceaseless sigh,
Still under bleak misfortune's blasting eye:
Doom'd to that sorest task of man alive—
To make three guineas do the work of five:
Laugh in Misfortune's face—the beldam witch!
Say, you'll be merry, though you can't be rich.

Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,
Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove;
Measur'st in desperate thought—a rope—thy neck—
Or, where the beetling cliff o'erhangs the deep,
Peerest to meditate the healing leap:
Would'st thou be cured, thou silly, moping elf,
Laugh at her follies—laugh e'en at thyself:
Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,
And love a kinder—that's your grand specific.—

To sum up all, be merry, I advise;
And as we're merry, may we still be wise.—

. . . . . .

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much-loved friend, is a morning of wishes: accept mine—so Heaven hear me as they are sincere! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, "May the great spirit bear up the weight of thy gray hairs; and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!"

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? is not the *Task* a glorious poem? The religion of the *Task*, bating in a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature: the religion that exalts, that enobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters; I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet, at the same time, I did not care to destroy, I discovered many of those rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's

library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

No. CLIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, IN LONDON.

Dumfries, 20th December, 1795.

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what is become of you, or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits. Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In this last article, I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English. I wrote the following for a favourite air.

. . . . . .

December, 29.

SINCE I began this letter I have been appointed to act in capacity as supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form: a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

. . . . . .

THIS is the season (New-year's-day is now my date) of wishing! and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness, superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitat

such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay, in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope, when he looks beyond the grave.

. . . . . .

January, 12.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend, the Doctor, long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I dare say for the hundred and fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners* and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of *Zeluco*; remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting me in his last publication.*

. . . . . .

No. CLIV.

TO MRS. ———

20th January, 1796.

I CANNOT express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of *Anacharsis*. In fact, I never met with a book that bewitched me so much; and I, as a member of the library, must warmly feel the obligations you have laid me under. Indeed, to me the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society; as *Anacharsis* is an indispensable desideratum to a son of the muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card, is, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed today, till about an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisetisements I lent (I did wrong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of h im.

The muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd.

. . . . . .

No. CLV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

31st January, 1796.

THESE many months you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a

* Edward.

friend I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! madam, ill can I afford at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction.—The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from the shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful, until after many weeks of a sick-bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear, the untried night,
That shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day.

No. CLVI.

TO MISS R———,

WHO HAD DESIRED HIM TO GO TO THE BIRTH-DAY ASSEMBLY ON THAT DAY TO SHOW HIS LOYALTY.

4th June, 1796.

I AM in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of showing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting, like that of Balak to Balaam—"Come curse me Jacob, and defy me Israel!" So say I—Come curse me that east wind; and come defy me the north! Would you have me, in such circumstances, to copy you out a love song?

. . . . . .

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball.—Why should I? "man delights me not, nor woman either." Can you supply me with the song, *Let us all be unhappy together?*—do if you can, and oblige *le pauvre miserable.*

R. B.

No. CLVII.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Brow, Sea-Bathing Quarters, 7th July, 1796.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED yours here this moment, and am highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention; a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more? For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bed fast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to

nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble, as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on the subject—only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding. The deuce of the matter is this; when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to £35 instead of £50.—What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself and keep a horse in country quarters—with a wife and five children at home, on £35? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and that of all the friends you can muster, to move our Commissioners of Excise to grant me the full salary. I dare say you know them all personally. If they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my memory does not serve me with, and I have no copy here; but I shall be at home soon, when I will send it you. Apropos to being at home, Mrs. Burns threatens in a week or two to add one more to my paternal charge, which, if of the right gender, I intend shall be introduced to the respectable designation of *Alexander Cunningham Burns;* my last was *James Glencairn:* so you can have no objection to the company of nobility. Farewell.

No. CLVIII.

TO MRS. BURNS.

MY DEAREST LOVE, *Brow, Thursday.*

I DELAYED writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow; porridge and milk are the only things I can taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jesse Lewars, that you are well. My very best and kindest compliments to her and all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, R. B.

No. CLIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MADAM, 12*th July*, 1796.

I HAVE written to you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns.* Your friendship, with which you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my palpitating heart. Farewell!!!

R. B.

THE above is supposed to be the last production of ROBERT BURNS who died on the 21st of the month, nine days afterwards. He had, however, the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled.

It is probable that the greater part of her letters to him were destroyed by our bard about the time that this last was written. He did not foresee that his own letters to her were to appear in print, nor conceive the disappointment that will be felt, that a few of this excellent lady's have not served to enrich and adorn the collection.

THE POEMS
OF
ROBERT BURNS.

TO THE

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN

OF THE

CALEDONIAN HUNT.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his Country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native Land; those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their Ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my Country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough; and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired—She whispered me to come to this ancient Metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my Songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this Address with the venal soul of a servile Author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the Plough, and am independent. I come to claim the Scottish name with you, my illustrious Countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my Country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the Great Fountain of Honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to awaken the Echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party; and may Social Joy await your return: when harassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native Seats; and may Domestic Happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the Ruler, and licentiousness in the People, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be,
With the sincerest gratitude,
and highest respect,
My Lords and Gentlemen,
Your most devoted humble servant,

Edinburgh, April 4, 1787. ROBERT BURNS.

POEMS,

CHIEFLY SCOTTISH.

THE TWA DOGS:

A TALE.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' *Auld King Coil*,
Upon a bonnie day in June,
When wearing thro' the afternoon,
Twa dogs that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd ance upon a time.

The first I'll name they ca'd him *Cæsar*,
Was keepit for his Honour's pleasure:
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Where sailors gang to fish for cod.

His locked, letter'd, braw brass collar
Show'd him the gentleman and scholar:
But tho' he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride na pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin',
Ev'n with a tinkler gipsey's messin'.
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke, tho' e'er sae duddie,
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
And stroan't on stanes and hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie,
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,*
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithfu' tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke,
His honet, sonsie, baws'nt face,
Aye gat him friends in ilka place.
His breast was white, his towzie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawcie tail, wi' upward curl,
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swurl.

* Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's Fingal.

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,
An' unco pack an' thick thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit;
Whyles mice and modieworts they hookit;
Whyles scour'd awa in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion;
Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down,
And there began a lang digression,
About the *lords o' the creation.*

CÆSAR.

I've often wonder'd honest *Luath*,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies lived ava.

Our Laird gets in his racked rents,
His coals, his kain, and a' his stents:
He rises when he likes himsel';
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonnie silken purse,
As lang's my tail, whare thro' the steeks,
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.

Frae morn to e'en its nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' tho' the gentry fast are stechin',
Yet e'vn the ha' folk fill their pechan
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sic like trashtrie,
That's little short o' downright wastrie.
Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,
Poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner,
Better than ony tenant man
His Honour has in a' the lan':
An' what poor cot folk pit their painch in,
I own its past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't eneugh;
A cotter howkin in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke,
Baring a quarry, and sic like,
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' we duddie weans,
An' nought but his han' darg, to keep
Them right and tight in thack an' rape.

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health, or want of masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;
But, how it comes, I never ken'd yet,
They're maistly wonderfu' contented;
An' buirdly chiels, an clever hizzies,
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye're negleckit,
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrepeckit!
L——d, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, and sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor fo'k,
As I wad by a stinking brock.

I've notic'd on our Laird's court day
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash;
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!

I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They're nae sae wretched's ane wad think;
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink:
They're sae accustomed wi' the sight,
The view o't gi'es them little fright.

Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,
They're aye in less or mair provided;
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans and faithfu' wives;
The prattlin things are just their pride
That sweetens a' their fire-side.

An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy
Can mak the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmas returns,
They get the jovial, rantin' kirns,
When *rural life*, o' every station,
Unite in common recreation:
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth,
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty winds;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream
An' sheds a heart-inspiring stream;
The luntin' pipe, and sneeshin' mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will:

The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse,
The young anes rantin' thro' the house,—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

Still it's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre aften play'd.
There's monie a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont fo'k,
Are riven out baith root and branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himself the faster
In favours wi' some gentle master,
Wha aiblins thrang a parliamentin',
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it:
For Britain's guid!—guid faith, I doubt it!
Say, rather, gaun as *Premiers* lead him,
An' saying *aye* or *no's* they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or may be, in a frolic daft,
To *Hague* or *Calais* takes a waft,
To mak a tour, and tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton* and see the worl'.

There, at Vienna, or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails!
Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
To thrum guitars and fecht wi' nowt;
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh—re-hunting among groves o' myrtles:
Then bouses drumly German water,
To mak himsel' look fair and fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love gifts of Carnival signoras.
For Britain's guid!—for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate!
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd
For gear to gang that gate at last!

O would they stay aback frae courts,
An' please themselves wi' countra sports,
It wad for every ane be better,
The Laird, the Tenant, an' the Cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,

Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er a bit they're ill to poor folk.

But will ye tell me, Master *Cæsar*,
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure!
Nae cauld or hunger e'er can steer them,
The very thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whyles where I am,
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.

It's true, they need na starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld age wi gripes an' granes:
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges an' schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themselves to vex them.
An' aye the less they hae to sturt them,
In like proportion less will hurt them;
A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzens done, she's unco weel;
But Gentlemen, an' Ladies warst,
Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank, an' lazy;
Tho' deil haet ails them, yet uneasy;
Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless;
An' ev'n their sports, their balls, an' races,
Their gallopin' through public places.
There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.
The men cast out in party matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches:
Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' wh-ring,
Neist day their life is past enduring.
The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great and gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.
Whyles o'er the wee bit cup and platie,
They sip the scandal potion pretty;
Or lee lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard.

There's some exception, man an' woman;
But this is Gentry's life in common.

By this the sun was out o'sight:
An' darker gloaming brought the night:

The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone;
The kye stood rowtin' i' the loan:
When up they gat an shook their lugs,
Rejoic'd they were na *men* but *dogs*;
And each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

SCOTCH DRINK.

Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bouse, and deep carouse
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.
SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, XXXI, 6, 7.

LET other poets raise a fracas,
'Bout vines, and wines, and drunken *Bacchus*,
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug,
I sing the juice *Scots bear* can mak us,
In glass or jug.

O thou, my *Muse!* guid auld *Scotch Drink:*
Whether thro' wimpling worms thou jink,
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp and wink,
To sing thy name.

Let husky Wheat the haughs adorn,
And Aits set up their awnie horn,
An' Pease and Beans at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, *John Barleycorn*,
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food!
Or tumblin' in the boiling flood,
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin';
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin',
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine and grievin';
But oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin',
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair;
At's weary toil;

Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy silver weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens fine.

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants?
Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspir'd,
When gaping they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fir'd.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in:
Or rekin' on a New-year morning
In cog or bicker,
An" just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
An' gusty sucker!

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see the fizz an' freath
I' the lugget caup!
Then *Burnewin* comes on like death
At ev'ry chaup.

Nae mercy then for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel',
Brings hard owrehip wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin weanies see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight,
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie gets a social night,
Or plack frae them.

When neebours anger at a plea,
An' just as wud as wud can be,
How easy can the *barley bree*
Cement the quarrel;
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason;
But mony daily weet their weason
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price.

Wae worth that *brandy*, burning trash,
Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash !
Twins monie a poor, doylt, drunken hash,
O' half his days :
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well !
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor plackless devils, like mysel' !
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' *whisky punch*
Wi' honest men.

O Whisky ! soul o' plays an' pranks !
Accept a Bardie's humble thanks !
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses !
Thou comes——they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a—s !

Thee, *Ferintosh !* O sadly lost !
Scotland, lament frae coast to coast !
Now colic grips, and barkin hoast,
May kill us a' ;
For loyal Forbes' chartered boast
Is ta'en awa' !

Thae curst horse leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the *Whisky Stells* their prize !
Haud up thy han', Deil ! ance, twice, thrice !
There, seize the blinkers !
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor d—n'd drinkers.

Fortune ! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' *Whisky gill*,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

THE AUTHOR'S

EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER*

TO THE

SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Dearest of Distillation! last and best———
———How art thou lost!—PARODY ON MILTON.

YE Irish Lords, Ye Knights an' Squires,
Wha *represent* our brughs an' shires,
And doucely manage our affairs
In parliament,
To you a simple Poet's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roupet Muse is hearse!
Your honours' hearts wi' grief 'twad pierce
To see her sittin' on her a—
Low i' the dust,
An' screichin' out prosaic verse,
An' like to brust!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' *me's* in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On *Aquavitæ;*
An' rouse them up to strong conviction
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon *Premier Youth,*
The honest, open, naked truth;
Tell him o' mine an Scotland's drouth,
Hs servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom!
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant 'em:
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want 'em.

In gath'ring votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack;
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back,
An' hum an' haw;

* This was written before the act anent the Scotch Distilleries, of session 1786; for which Scotland and the Author return their most grateful thanks.

But raise your arm, an' tell your crack
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greeting owre her thrissle;
Her mutchkin stoup as toom's a whissle;
An' d-mn'd Excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin' a *stell*,
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel,
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,
A blackguard Smnggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie Vintner,
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter,
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name of *Scot*,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld Mither's *pot*
Thus dung in staves,
An' plundered o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,
Trode i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like *Montgomeries* fight,
Or gab like *Boswell*,
There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your Honours, can ye see't,
The kind, auld, cantie Carlin greet,
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it,
An' tell them wi' a patriot heat,
Ye winna bear it!

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period an' pause,
An' wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster, a true blue Scot I'se warran;
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste *Kilkerran*;
An' that glib-gabbet Highland Baron,
The Laird o' *Graham*;
An' ane, a chap that's damn'd auld farran,
Dundas his name.

Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie;
True *Campbells*, *Frederick*, an' *Ilay*;
An' *Livingstone*, the bauld *Sir Willie*;
An' mony ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her *kettle*;
Or faith! I'll wad my new pleugh-pettle,
Ye'll see't or lang,
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin' whittle,
Anither sang.

This while she's been in cank'rous mood,
Her *lost Militia* fir'd her bluid;
(Deil na they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!)
An' now she's like to rin red-wud
About her Whisky.

An' L—d if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,
I' the first she meets!

For G—d sake, Sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,
An' to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit an' lear,
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, *Charlie Fox*,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;
But gie him't het, my hearty cocks!
E'en cowe the caddie!
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin' lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld *Boconnock's*,
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bannocks,
An' drink his health in auld *Nanse Tinnock's*
Nine times a week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some *commutation* broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He need na fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch,
The *Coalition*.

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;
She's just a devil wi' a rung;
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung
She'll no desert.

An' now, ye chosen *Five-and-Forty*,
May still your Mither's heart support ye:
Then, tho' a minister grow dorty,
An' kick your place,
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your Honours a' your days,
Wi' soups o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes
That haunt *Saint Jamie's*!
Your humble poet sings an' prays
While *Rab* his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich clust'ring rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But blithe and frisky.
She eyes her freeborn martial boys,
Tak aff their Whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms!
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun's a burthen on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' pouther;
Their bauldest thought's a hankering swither
To stan' or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throwther,
To save their skin.

But bring a *Scotsman* frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal *George's* will,
An' there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, with fearless eyes he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas.

Sages their solemn een may steek,
An' raise a philosophic reek,
An' physically causes seek,
In clime an' season;
But tell me *Whisky's* name in Greek,
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected Mither!
Tho, whyles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare you sit, on craps o' heather,
Ye tine your dam;
(*Freedom* and *Whisky* gang thegither!)
Tak aff your dram!

THE HOLY FAIR.*

A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty Observation;
And secret hung with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation;
A mask that like the gorget show'd
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion.

HYPOCRISY-A-LA-MODE.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walked forth to view the corn,
An' snuff the callar air,
The rising sun owre *Galston* muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin',
The hares were hirplin' down the furs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin'
Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road,
Cam skelpin' up the way;
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart lining;
The third that gaed a wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay that gay.

The *twa* appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes:
Their visage wither'd, lang, an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes;
The *third* came up, hap-step-an'-loup,
As light as ony lammie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bannet, aff, quoth I, 'Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me;
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye.'
Quo' she, an' laughin' as she spak,
An' tak's me by the hands,

* Holy Fair is a common phrase in the west of Scotland for a sacramental occasion.

"Ye, for my sake, ha'e gi'en the feck
Of a' the ten commands
A screed some day.

"My name is *Fun*—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye ha'e;
An' this is *Superstition* here,
An' that's *Hypocrisy*.
I'm gaun to —— *Holy Fair*,
To spend an hour in daffin';
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkled pair,
We will get famous laughin'
At them this day."

Quoth I, 'With a' my heart I'll do't;
I'll get my Sunday's sark on,
An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith we'se hae fine remarkin'!'
Then I gaed hame at crowdie time,
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad frae side to side,
Wi' monie a weary body,
In droves that day.

Here farmers gash, in ridin' graith
Gaed hoddin' by their cotters;
Their swankies young, in braw braid-claith
Are spruugin' o'er the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin' barefoot, thrang,
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' *sweet milk cheese* in monie a whang,
An' *farls* bak'd wi' butter.
Fu' crump that day.

When by the *plate* we set our nose,
Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr Black Bonnet throws,
An we maun draw our tippence.
Then in we go to see the show,
On ev'ry side they're gatherin',
Some carrying deals, some chairs an' stools,
An' some are busy bletherin',
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs,
An' screen our countra Gentry,
There, *racer Jess*, an' twa-three whores,
Are blinkin' at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin' jades,
Wi' heavin' breast and bare neck,
An' there a batch of wabster lads,
Blackguardin' frae K———ck,
For *fun* this day.

Here some are thinkin' on their sins,
An' some upo' their claes;

Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
Anither sighs an' prays;
On this hand sits a chosen swatch,
Wi' screw'd up grace-proud faces;
On that a set o' chaps at watch,
Thrang winkin' on the lasses
To chairs that day.

O happy is the man an' blest!
Nae wonder that it pride him!
Wha's ain dear lass, that he likes best,
Comes clinkin' down beside him!
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair-back,
He sweetly does compose him!
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
An's loof upon her bosom
Unkenn'd that day.

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation;
For ——— speels the holy door
Wi' tidings o' damnation.
Should *Hornie*, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o'God present him,
The vera sight o' ——'s face,
To's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin' an thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
Oh, how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day.

But hark! the *tent* has chang'd its voice;
There's peace and rest nae langer:
For a' the *real judges* rise,
They canna sit for anger.
——— opens out his cauld harangues
On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine
Of moral pow'rs and reason?
His English style, an' gesture fine,
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like *Socrates* or *Antonine*,
Or some auld pagan Heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum;
For ———, frae the water-fit,
Ascends the holy rostrum:
See, up he's got the word o' God,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,
While *Common-sense* has ta'en the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate,
Fast, fast, that day.

Wee ——— neist the guard relieves,
An' orthodoxy raibles,
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
And thinks it auld wives' fables:
But, faith; the birkie wants a manse
So cannily he hums them:
Altho' his carnal wit and sense
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him
At times that day.

Now but an' ben, the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators:
Here's crying out for bakes and gills,
And there the pint stoop clatters;
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic, an wi' Scripture,
They raise a din, that in the end,
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on Drink! it gi'es us mair
Than either School or College;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be't whisky gill, or penny wheep,
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion
By night or day.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul and body,
Sit round the table weel content,
An' steer about the toddy.
On this ane's dress, an 'that ane's leuk,
They're makin' observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk,
An' forming assignations
To meet some day.

But now the L—d's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts:
Black ——— is na sparin':
His piercing words, like Highland swords
Divide the joints an' marrow;

His talk o' Hell, where devils dwell,
Our very sauls does harrow*
Wi' fright that day.

A vast, unbottom'd boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane,
Wha's ragin' flame an scorchin' heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half asleep start up wi' fear,
And think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neighbour snorin'
Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale to tell
How monie stories past,
An' how they crowded to the yill,
When they were a' dismist;
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups,
Amang the furms an' benches;
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches
An' dawds that day.

In comes a gaucie, gash guidwife,
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife,
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen, about the *grace*,
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
And gi'es them't like a tether,
Fu' lang that day,

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace
Or melvie his braw claithing!
O wives be mindfu' ance yoursel'
How bonnie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna for a kebbuck-heel,
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day.

Now *Clinumkbell*, wi' rattlin' tow,
Begins to jow an' croon;
Some swagger hame, the best they dow,
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink,
Till lasses strip their shoon;
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They're a' in famous tune,
For crack that day.

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!

* Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fou o' love divine;
There's some are fou o' brandy;
An' mony jobs that day begin,
May end in houghmagandie
Some hither day.

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK.

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd
Ev'n Ministers, they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid, at times, to vend,
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true's the De'il's in hell
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel'
'S a muckle pity.

The Clachan yill had made me canty,
I was nae fou' but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whiles, but yet took tent aye
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glow'r
The distant *Cumnock* hills out-owre;
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four,
I couldna tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin down on *Willie's mill*
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker;
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' *Something* did forgather,
That put me in an eerie swither:
An' awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-taed leister on the ither,
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then, its shanks,

They were as thin, as sharp, an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.

'Guid-een,' quo' I; 'Friend! hae ye been mawin',
'When ither folk, are busy sawin'?'
It seem'd to mak' a kind o' stan',
But naething spak:
At length, says I, 'Friend, where ye gaun,
Will ye go back?'

It spak right howe,—'My name is *Death*,
But be na fley'd.'—Quoth I, 'Guid faith,
Ye're maybe come to stap my breath;
But tent me, billie:
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith,
See there's a gully!'

'Guidman,' quo' he, 'put up your whittle,
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd,
I wad na mind it, no, that spittle
Out owre my beard.'

'Weel, weel!' says I, 'a bargain be't;
Come, gie's your hand, an' sae we're gree't;
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat,
Come gie's your news;
This while ye hae been mony a gate,
At mony a house.'

'Ay, ay!' quo' he, an' shook his head,
'Its een a lang, lang time indeed
Sin' I began to nick the thread,
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread,
An' sae maun *Death*.

'Sax thousand years are near hand fled
Sin' I was to the butching bred,
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scar me;
Till ane *Hornbook's* taen up the trade,
An' faith, he'll waur me.

'Ye ken *Jock Hornbook*, i' the Clachan,
Deil mak his king's hood in a spleuchan!
He's grown sae weel acquaint wi' *Buchan* *
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin'
An' pouk my hips.

'See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart:
But Doctor *Hornbook*, wi' his art
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a f—t,
Damn'd haet they'll kill.

* Buchan's Domestic Medicine.

'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen,
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care,
It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did na mair.

'*Hornbook* was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
Then when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae a pierc'd the heart
Of a kail-runt.

'I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I nearhand coupit wi' my hurry,
But yet the bauld *Apothecary*
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

'Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Altho' their face he ne'er had kend it,
Just ——— in a kail-blade, and send it,
As soon's he smells't,
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
At once he tells't.

'An' then a' doctors' saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

'Calces o' fossils, earths, and trecs;
True Sal-marinum o' the seas;
The Farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

'Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus Spiritus of capons;
Or Mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings;
Distill'd *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' Midge-tail clippings,
An' mony mae.'

'Waes me for *Johnny Ged's Hole* now;'
Quo' I, 'If that the news be true!
His braw calf-ward where gowans grew,
Sae white an' bonnie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plough;
They'll ruin *Johnnie!*'

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,
An' says, 'Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirk-yards will soon be till'd eneugh,

Tak ye nae fear;
They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh
In twa-three year.

'Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want o' breath,
This night I'm free to tak my aith,
That *Hornbook's* skill
Ha clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap an' pill.

'An honest Wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel bred,
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed,
But ne'er spak mair.

'A countra Laird had ta'en the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts,
His only son for *Hornbook* sets,
An' pays him well;
The lad, for twa guid gimmer pets,
Was laird himsel'.

'A bonnie lass, ye ken her name,
Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
She trusts hersel', to hide the shame,
In *Hornbook's* care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there.

'That's just a swatch o' *Hornbook's* way;
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay.
An's weel paid for't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his damn'd dirt.

'But hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
Though dinna ye be speaking o't;
I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
As dead's a herrin';
Neist time we meet, I'll wad a groat,
He gets his fairin'!

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell,
Some wee short hour ayont the *twal*,
Which rais'd us baith;
I took the way that pleased mysel',
And sae did *Death*.

THE BRIGS OF AYR:

A POEM.

INSCRIBED TO J. B——, ESQ. AYR.

THE simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from every bough;

The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet in the green thorn bush;
The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,
Or deep toned plovers, grey, wild whistling o'er the hill;
Shall he, nurst in the Peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy independence bravely bred,
By early Poverty to hardship steel'd,
And train'd to arms in stern Misfortune's field—
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes?
Or labour hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating Prose?
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward.
Still if some Patron's generous care he trace,
Skilled in the secret, to bestow with grace;
When B—— befriends his humble name,
And hands the rustic stranger up to fame,
With heart-felt throbs his grateful bosom swells,
The godlike bliss, to give alone excels.

* * * * * *

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter hap,
And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap:
Potatoe bings are snugged up frae skaith
Of coming Winter's biting, frosty breath;
The bees rejoicing o'er their simmer toils,
Unnumber'd buds an' flowers' delicious spoils,
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen piles,
Are doom'd by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils, smoor'd wi' brimstone reek:
The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side,
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;
The feather'd field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:
(What warm, poetic heart, but inly bleeds,
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)
Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs:
Nae mair the grove wi' airy concert rings,
Except, perhaps, the Robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree;
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide spreads the noontide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.
'Twas in that season, when a simple bard,
Unknown and poor, simplicity's reward,
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of *Ayr*,
By whim inspired, or haply prest wi' care;
He left his bed, and took his wayward route,
And down by *Simpson's* wheel'd the left about:
(Whether impell'd by all-directing Fate
To witness what I after shall narrate;

Or whether rapt in meditation high,
He wander'd out he knew not where nor why),
The drowsy *Dungeon clock*, had number'd two,
And *Wallace tower* had sworn the fact was true:
The tide-swoln Firth, with sullen-sounding roar,
Thro' the still night dash'd hoarse along the shore:
All else was hush'd in Nature's closed e'e;
The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept, gently crustling, o'er the glittering stream.

When, lo! on either hand the list'ning bard,
The clanging sough of whistling wings he heard;
Two dusky forms dart thro' the midnight air,
Swift as the *Gos* drives on the wheeling hare;
Ane on th' *Auld Brig* his airy shape uprears,
The ither flutters o'er the *rising piers*;
Our warlike Rhymer instantly descry'd
The Sprites that owre the *Brigs of Ayr* preside.
(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
An' ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;
Fays, Spunkies, Kelpies, a' they can explain them,
And ev'n the vera deils they brawly ken them.)
Auld Brig appear'd of ancient Pictish race,
The vera wrinkles Gothic in his face:
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,
Yet teughly doure, he bade an unco bang.
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat,
That he, at *Lon'on* frae ane *Adams* got;
In's hand five taper staves as smooth's a bead,
Wi' virls and whirlygigums at the head.
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,
Spying the time-worn flaws in every arch;
It chanc'd his new-come neebor took his e'e,
And e'en a vex'd an' angry heart had he!
Wi' thieveless sneer to see each modish mien
He, down the water, gies him thus guide'en—

AULD BRIG.

I doubt na', frien', ye'll think ye're nae sheep-shank,
Ance ye were streckit o'er frae bank to bank
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me,
Tho' faith that day I doubt ye'll never see;
There'll be, if that day come, I'll wad a boddle,
Some fewer whigmaleeries in your noddle.

NEW BRIG.

Auld Vandal, ye but show your little mense,
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor narrow foot-path of a street,
Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,
Your ruin'd formless bulk, o' stane an' lime,
Compare wi' bonnie *Brigs* o' modern time?
There's men o' taste would tak the *Ducatstream*,
Tho' they should cast the very sark and swim,

Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the view
Of sic an ugly Gothic hulk as you.

AULD BRIG.

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!
This monie a year I've stood the flood an' tide;
An' tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a *Brig* when ye're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling *Coil*,
Or stately *Lugar's* mossy fountains boil,
Or where the *Greenock* winds his moorland course,
Or haunted *Garpal* draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds and spotted thowes,
In mony a torrent down his sna-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;
And from *Glenbuck* down to the *Ratton key*,
Auld *Ayr* is just one lengthen'd tumbling sea;
Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies,
A lesson sadly teaching, to your cost,
That Architecture's noble art is lost!

NEW BRIG.

Fine *Architecture*, trowth, I needs must say't o't!
The L—d be thankit that we've tint the gate o't!
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,
Hanging with threat'ning jut, like precipices;
O'er arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves:
Windows and doors, in nameless sculpture drest,
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;
Forms like some bedlam statuary's dream,
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;
Forms might be worshipp'd on the bended knee,
And still the *second dread command* be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.
Mansions that would disgrace the building taste
Of any mason, reptile, bird, or beast;
Fit only for a doited Monkish race,
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace,
Or cuifs of later times, wha held the notion
That sullen gloom was sterling true devotion.
Fancies that our guid Brugh denies protection,
And soon may they expire, unblest with resurrection!

AULD BRIG.

O ye, my dear-remember'd ancient yealings,
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!

Ye worthy *Proveses*, an' mony a *Bailie*,
Wha in the paths o' righteousness did toil aye;
Ye dainty *Deacons*, an' ye douce *Conveners*,
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners;
Ye godly *Councils* wha hae blest this town;
Ye godly *Brethren* of the sacred gown,
Wha meekly gae your *hurdies* to the *smiters*;
And (what would now be strange) ye *godly Writers*:
A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo,
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do!
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation.
To see each melancholy alteration;
And agonizing, curse the time and place
When ye begat the base, degenerate race!
Nae langer Rev'rend Men, their country's glory,
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story!
Nae longer thrifty Citizens, an' douce,
Meet owre a pint, or in the Council house;
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless Gentry,
The herryment and ruin of the country;
Men, three parts made by tailors and by barbers,
Wha waste your well-hain'd gear on d——d *new Brigs* and *Harbours!*

NEW BRIG.

Now haud you there! for faith ye've said enough,
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through,
As for your Priesthood, I shall say but little
Corbies and *Clergy* are a shot right kittle:
But, under favour o' your langer beard,
Abuse o' Magistrates might weel be spared;
To liken them to your auld warld squad,
I must needs say comparisons are odd.
In *Ayr*, Wag-wits nae mair can hae a handle
To mouth 'a Citizen,' a term o' scandal:
Nae mair the Council waddles down the street
In all the pomp of ignorant conceit;
Men wha grew wise priggin' owre hops an' raisins,
Or gather'd lib'ral views in Bonds and Seisins.
If haply Knowledge, on a random tramp,
Had shored them with a glimmer of his lamp,
And would to Common-sense, for once betrayed them,
Plain dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them.

* * * * *

What farther clishmaclaver might been said,
What bloody wars, if Sprites had blood to shed,
No man can tell; but all before their sight,
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glitt'ring stream they featly danced:
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanced:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet.
While arts of Minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.

O had *M'Lauchlin*, thairm-inspiring sage,
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,
When thro' his dear *Strathspeys* they bore with Highland rage;
Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,
The lover's raptured joys or bleeding cares;
How would his Highland lug been nobler fired,
And even his matchless hand with finer touch inspir'd!
No guess could tell what intrument appear'd,
But all the soul of Music's self was heard:
Harmonious concert rung in every part,
While simple melody poured moving on the heart.
The Genius of the stream in front appears,
A venerable chief advanced in years;
His hoary head with water lilies crown'd,
His manly leg with garter tangle bound.
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;
Then, crown'd with flow'ry hay, came Rural Joy,
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,
Led yellow Autumn wreath'd with nodding corn;
Then Winter's time-bleached locks did hoary show,
By Hospitality with cloudless brow;
Next follow'd Courage with his martial stride,
From where the *Feal* wild-woody coverts hide:
Benevolence, with mild benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of *Stair:*
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode
From simple *Catrine*, their long-lov'd abode;
Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazel wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken iron instruments of death;
At sight of whom our Sprites forgat their kindling wrath.

THE ORDINATION.

For sense they little owe to Frugal Heav'n—
To please the Mob they hide the little giv'n.

KILMARNOCK Wabsters, fidge and claw
An' pour your creeshie nations;
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw,
Of a' denominations.
Swith to the *Laigh Kirk*, ane an' a',
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to *Begbie's* in a raw,
An' pour divine libations,
For joy this day.

Curst Common Sense, that imp o' hell,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder:
But O——— aft made her yell,
An' R——— sair misca'd her;

This day M'——— takes the flail,
An' he's the boy will blaud her:
He'll clap a *shangan* on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her
Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste an' turn King David owre,
An' lilt wi' holy clangor;
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' skirl up the Bangor.
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure,
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,
For heresy is in her power,
And gloriously she'll whang her
Wi' pith this day.

Come let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless *Ham* leugh at his Dad,
Which made *Canaan* a niger;
Or *Phineas* drove the murdering blade,
Wi' whore-abhorring rigour;
Or *Zipporah*, the scaulding jade,
Was like a bluidy tiger
I' the inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
An' bind him down wi' caution,
That *Stipend* is a carnal weed,
He taks but for the fashion;
An' gie him o'er the flock to feed,
An' punish each transgression;
Especial, *rams* that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin',
Spare them nae day.

Now auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
An' toss thy horns fu' canty;
Nae mair thoul't rowte out owre the dale
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' *gospel kail*,
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' *runts o' grace*, the pick and wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.

Nae mair by *Babel's streams* we'll weep,
To think upon our *Zion*,
An' hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-dryin';
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
An' owre the thairms be tryin';
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
An' a' like lambs' tails flyin'
Fu' fast this day.

Lang *Patronage*, wi' rod o' airn,
Has shored the Kirk's undoin',

As lately *Fenwick*, sair forfairn,
Has proven to its ruin:
Our Patron, honest man! *Glencairn*,
He saw mischef was brewing;
An' like a godly elect bairn,
He's waled us out a true ane,
An' sound this day.

Now R——— harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever;
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,
For there they'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear,
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the *Netherton* repair,
An' turn a carpet weaver
Aff hand this day.

M——— and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones;
Auld *Hornie* did the *Laigh Kirk* watch,
Just like a winkin' baudrons:
An' aye he catch'd the tither wretch,
To fry them in his caudrons:
But now his honour maun detach,
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast, this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes,
She's swingein through the city;
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow it's unco pretty:
There Learning, wi' his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty:
An' Common-sense is gaun, she says,
To mak to *Jamie Beattie*
Her plaint this day.

But there's Morality himsel',
Embracing a' opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions;
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,
As ane were peelin' onions;
Now there—they're packed aff to hell,
An' banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
M'———, R———, are the boys,
That heresy can torture:
They'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
An' cowe her measure shorter
By the head some day.

Come bring the tither mutchkin in,
An' here's for a conclusion,
To every *Neæ Light* mother's son,
From this time forth Confusion:
If mair they deave us wi' their din,
Or Patronage intrusion,
We'll light a spunk, an' ev'ry skin,
We'll rin them aff in fusion,
Like oil some day.

THE CALF.

TO THE REV. MR. ——

On his Text, MALACHI, ch. iv. ver. 2. And they shall go forth, and grow up, like CALVES of the stall.

RIGHT SIR! you text I'll prove it true,
Though heretics may laugh;
For instance; there's yoursel' just now,
God knows, an unco *Calf!*

An' should some Patron be so kind,
As bless you wi' a kirk,
I doubt nae, Sir, but then we'll find,
Ye're still as great a *Stirk.*

But, if the Lover's raptur'd hour
Shall ever be your lot,
Forbid it, every heavenly Power,
You e'er should prove a *Stot!*

Tho', when some kind, connubial Dear,
Your but-and-ben adorns,
The like has been that you may wear
A noble head of *horns.*

And in your lug, most reverend James,
To hear you roar and rowte,
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
To rank amang the *nowte.*

And when ye're number'd wi' the dead,
Below a grassy hillock,
Wi' justice they may mark your head—
"Here lies a famous *Bullock.*"

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

O Prince! O Chief of many throned Powers,
Who led the embattled Seraphim to war.—MILTON.

O THOU! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches.

Hear me, auld *Hangie*, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;

I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;
Far kend and noted is thy name;
An' tho' yon lowin' heugh's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An' faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

Whyles, ranging like a roarin' lion,
For prey, a' holes and corners tryin';
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',
Tirling the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin',
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my reverend *Graunie* say,
In lanely glens you like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my *Graunie* summon,
To say her prayers, douce honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin!
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin' thro' the boortries comin',
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae weary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin' light,
Wi' you, mysel', I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch stour, quaick—quaick—
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
On whistling wings.

Let *Warlocks* grim, an' wither'd *hags*,
Tell how wi' you on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs, and dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
Owre howkit dead.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain;
For, oh! the yellow treasure's ta'en
By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint *Hawkie's* gaen
As yell's the Bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse,
On young Guidman, fond, keen, an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
An' float the jinglin' icy-boord,
Then *Water-kelpies* haunt the foord,
By your direction,
An' 'nighted Trav'llers are allured
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversing *Spunkies*
Decoy the wight that late and drunk is;
The bleezin', curst, mischievous monkeys
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When *Mason's* mystic *word* an' *grip*,
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell;
The youngest Brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell!

Lang syne, in *Eden's* bonnie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shared,
The raptured hour,
Sweet on the fragrant flowery swaird
In shady bower.

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog!
Ye came to Paradise *incog.*,
An' played on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant world a shog,
'Maist ruined a'.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds, and reestit gizz,
Ye did present your smoutie phiz
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the *man of Uz*
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hall,
While scabs and blotches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
An' lowsed his ill-tongued wicked Scawl,
Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin' fierce,
Sin' that day *Michael* did you pierce,

Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld *Cloots*, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin',
To your black pit;
But faith! he'll turn a corner, jinkin',
And cheat you yet.

But, fare ye weel, auld *Nickie-ben!*
O wad ye tak' a thought and men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upon yon den,
Even for your sake!

THE

DEATH AND DYING WORDS

OF

POOR MAILIE,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As *Mailie*, an' her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,
An' owre she warsled in the ditch;
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When *Hughoc* he came doytin by.

Wi' glowrin' een, and lifted han's,
Poor *Hughoc* like a statue stan's:
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But wae's my heart! he could na mend it!
He gaped wide, but naething spak!
At length poor *Mailie* silence brak.

"O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my waefu' case!
My *dying words* attentive hear,
An' bear them to my Master dear.

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,
O, bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will:
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

"Tell him, he was a master kin',
An' aye was guid to me an' mine;

An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

"O bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives;
But gie them guid cow milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel';
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay an' rips o' corn.

"An' may they never learn the gaets,
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' *pets!*
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal,
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears,
For mony a year come thro' the sheers:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.

"My poor *toop lamb*, my son an' heir,
O bid him breed him up wi' care!
An' if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast,
An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless, brutes.

"An neist, my *yowie*, silly thing,
Guid keep thee frae a tether string!
O! may thou ne'er forgather up
Wi' ony blastit moorland toop:
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel'!

"An' now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith:
An' when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.

"Now, honest *Hughoc*, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether-"

This said, poor *Mailie* turn'd her head,
And clos'd her een amang the dead.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

LAMENT in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead;
The last sad cape-stane o' his woes;
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,

Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neebor dear,
In *Mailie* dead.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed;
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than *Mailie* dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel' wi' mense:
I'll say't, she never brack a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' *Mailie* dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image in her *yowe*
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For *Mailie* dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
Wi' tawted ket, an hairy hips:
For her forbears were brought in ships,
Frae yont the *Tweed!*
A bonnier *fleesh* ne'er cross'd the clips
Than *Mailie* dead.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile wanchancie thing—*a rape!*
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
Wi' chokin' dread;
An' *Robin's* bonnet wave wi' crape,
For *Mailie* dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonnie *Doon!*
An' wha on *Ayr* your chaunters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' *Robin's* reed!
His heart will never get aboon
His *Mailie* dead.

TO J. S——.

Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much!——BLAIR.

DEAR S——, the sleest, paukie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief,
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef

Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
And every star that blinks aboon,
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon,
Just gaun to see you:
And every ither pair that's done,
Mair taen I'm with you.

That auld capricious carlin, Nature,
To mak amends for scrimpit stature,
She's turn'd you aff, a human creature
On her *first* plan,
And in her freaks, on every feature,
She's wrote, the *Man*.

Just now I've taen the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle's working prime,
My fancy yerkit up sublime
Wi' hasty summon;
Hae ye a leisure moment's time
To hear what's comin'?

Some rhyme a neebor's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash,
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An' raise a din;
For me an *aim* I never fash;
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damned my fortune to the groat:
But in requit,
Has bless'd me wi' a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's taen a sklent,
To try my fate in guid black *prent;*
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries 'Hoolie
I red you, honest man, tak tent!
Ye'll shaw your folly.

'There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in *Greek*, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensured their debtors,
A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tetters,
Their unknown pages.

Then farewell hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
O

Are whistling thrang,
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, with tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living, sound an' hale,
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave *care* o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak' the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy land,
Where pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic-wand then let us wield
For ance that five-an' forty's speel'd,
See crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkled face,
Comes hostin', hirplin', owre the field,
Wi' creepin' pace.

When ance *life's day* draws near the gloamin',
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin';
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
An' social noise;
An' fareweel dear deluding *woman*,
The joy of joys!

O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at the expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Amang the leaves:
And though the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some lucky, find a flowery spat,
For which they never toiled nor swat
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain
And haply eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some Fortune chase;
Keen hope does every sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie in some cozie place,
They close the *day*.

An' others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules or roads observin';
To right or left, eternal swervin',
They zig-zag on;
Till curst wi' age, obscure an' starvin,'
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish poor complaining!
Is Fortune's fickle *Luna* waning?
E'en let her gang,
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, 'Ye Pow'rs!' and warm implore,
Tho' I should wander *terra* o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Aye rowth o' rhymes.

'Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards:
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
An' maids of honour
An' yill an' whisky gie to cairds,
Until they sconner.

'A title, *Dempster* merits it;
And *garter* gie to *Willie Pitt*,
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.
But give me real, sterling wit,
An' I'm content.

'While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't *water-brose*, or *muslin-kail*,
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the muses dinna fail
To say the grace.'

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath misfortune's blows,
As weel's I may:
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, an' prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk, that live by rule,
Graves, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!

How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke!

Nae hair-brain'd sentimental traces
In your unletter'd nameless faces;
In *arioso* trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But *gravissimo*, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae *grave*, nae doubt ye're *wise*,
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattlin' squad:
I see you upward cast your eyes—
—Ye ken the road.—

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there—
Wi' you I'll scarce gang *ony where*—
Then, *Jamie*, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content wi' *you* to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.

A DREAM.

Thoughts, words, and deeds, the statute blames with reason;
But surely dreams were ne'er indicted treason.

On reading, in the public papers, the LAUREATE'S ODE, with the other parade of June 4, 1786, the author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the birth-day levee; and in his dreaming fancy, made the following ADDRESS.]

GUID-MORNIN' to your *Majesty!*
May heaven augment your blisses,
On every new *birth day* ye see,
A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here at your levee,
On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
Amang the birth-day dresses
Sae fine this day.

I see ye're complimented thrang,
By mony a lord an' lady,
'God save the King!' 's a cuckoo sang
That's unco easy said aye;
The *poets*, too, a venal gang,
Wi' rhymes weel turn'd an' ready,
Wad gar you trow ye ne'er do wrang,
But aye unerring steady,
On sic a day,

For me! before a monarch's face,
Ev'n *there* I winna flatter;
For neither pension, post, nor place,
Am I your humble debtor:

So nae reflection on *your grace*
Your kingship to bespatter;
There's monie waur been o' the race,
An' aiblins ane been better
Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sov'reign king,
My skill may well be doubted;
But facts are chiels that winna ding
An' downa be disputed:
Your royal nest beneath your wing,
Is e'en right reft an' clouted,
An' now the third part o' the string,
An less, will gang about it
Than did ae day.

Far be't frae me that I aspire
To blame your legislation,
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire,
To rule this mighty nation!
But faith! I muckle doubt, my *Sire*,
Ye've trusted ministration
To chaps, wha in a barn or byre,
Wad better fill'd their station
Than courts yon day.

An' now ye've gien auld *Britain* peace,
Her broken shins to plaister;
Your sair taxation does her fleece,
Till she has scarce a tester;
For me, thank God, my life's a *lease*,
Nae *bargain* wearing faster,
Or faith! I fear that wi' the geese,
I shortly boost to pasture
I' the craft some day.

I'm no mistrusting *Willie Pitt*,
When taxes he enlarges,
An' *Will's* true guid fallow's get,
A name not envy spairges),
That he intends to pay your debt,
An' lessen a' your charges;
But God sake! let nae *saving fit*
Abridge your bonnie barges
An' boats this day.

Adieu, my *Liege*, may freedom geck
Beneath your high protection;
An' may ye rax Corruption's neck,
An' gie her for dissection!
But since I'm here, I'll no neglect,
In loyal, true affection,
To pay your *Queen*, with due respect,
My fealty an' subjection
This great birth-day.

Hail *Majesty, Most Excellent*,
While nobles strive to please ye,

Will ye accept a compliment
A simple poet gies ye?
Thae bonnie bairntime, Heav'n has lent,
Still higher may they heeze ye,
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,
For ever to release ye
Frae care that day.

For you, young potentate o' Wales,
I tell your *Highness* fairly,
Down Pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak *Diana's* pales,
Or rattled dice wi' *Charlie*,
By night or day.

Yet aft a ragged *cowte's* been known
To mak a noble *aiver*:
So, ye may doucely fill a throne,
For a' their clish-ma-claver:
There, him at *Agincourt* wha shone,
Few better were or braver;
And yet wi' funny queer *Sir John*,
He was an unco shaver,
For monie a day.

For you, right reverend Osnabrug,
Nane sets the *lawn-sleeve* sweeter,
Altho' a ribbon at your lug
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown that paughty dog
That bears the keys of Peter,
Then, swith! an' get a wife to hug,
Or, trouth, ye'll stain the mitre
Some luckless day.

Young royal *Tarry Breeks*, I learn,
Ye've lately come athwart her;
A glorious *galley* stem an' stern,
Weel rigged for *Venus'* barter;
But first hang out, that she'll discern
Your hymeneal charter,
Then heave aboard your grapple airn,
An', large upo' her quarter,
Come full that day.

Ye, lastly, bonnie blossoms a,'
Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heav'n make you guid as well as braw,
An' gie you lads a-plenty:
But sneer nae *British boys* awa',
For kings are unco scant aye;
An' German gentles are but *sma'*,
They're better just than *want aye*,
On onie day.

God bless you a' ! consider now,
Ye're unco muckle dautet ;
But, ere the *course* o' life be thro'
It may be bitter sautet ;
An' I hae seen their *coggie* fou,
That yet hae tarrow't at it;
But or the *day* was done, I trow,
The laggen they hae clautet
Fu' clean that day.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.

The sun had closed the winter's day,
The curler's quat their roaring play,
An' hunger'd maukin ta'en her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary *flingin-tree*
The lee-lang day had tired me :
And whan the day had closed his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the *spence*, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely by the ingle-cheek,
I sat, and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin' ;
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin'.

All in this mottie mistie clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae-thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank and clarkit
My cash account :
Whilst here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
I a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring, blockhead ! coof !
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I, henceforth, would be *rhyme-proof*,
Till my last breath—

When click ! the string the sneck did draw ;
An' jee ! the door gaed to the wa';

A' by the ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin' bright,
A tight outlandish *Hizzie*, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht!
The infant-aith half-form'd was crush't;
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest worth, she blush't,
And stepped ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad *holly-boughs*,
Were twisted gracefu' round her brows;
I took her for some *Scottish Muse*,
By that same token;
An' come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A 'hair-brained sentimental trace'
Was strongly marked in her face;
A wildly-witty rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turned on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonnie *Jean*
Could only pear it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
Nane else cam near it.

Her *mantle* large of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep *lights* and *shades*, bold mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd to my astonish'd view,
A *well-known* land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shore Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here *Doon* pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed *Irwine* stately thuds:
Auld hermit *Ayr* staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient *borough* rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,

To every nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their suthron foes.

His COUNTRY'S SAVIOUR, mark him well!
Bold *Richardton's* heroic swell;
The chief on *Sark* who glorious fell,
In high command;
And *he* whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptred *Pictish shade*
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race portray'd
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love
In musing mood,)
An *aged Judge*, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck reverential awe,
The learned *sire* and *son* I saw,
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore,
This, all its source and end to draw,
That to adore.

Brydon's brave ward I well could spy,
Beneath old *Scotia's* smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

WITH musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heav'nly seeming *fair*;
A whisp'ring throb did witness bear,
Of kindred sweet,

When with an elder sister's air,
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low,
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know, the great *genius* of this land.
Has many a light, aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They *Scotia's* race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart;
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, 'mid the vernal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the land.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence *Fullarton*, the brave and young;
Hence *Dempster's* zeal-inspired tongue;
Hence sweet harmonious *Beattie* sung
His "Minstrel lays;"
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The *sceptic's* bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human kind,
The rustic Bard, the lab'ring Hind,
The Artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blithe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil,
For humble gains,
And make his cottage scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some bounded to a district space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace,
Of *rustic Bard*;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

"*Of these am I—Coila* my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the *Campbells*, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r,
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fired at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep-green mantled earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored *Name*,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,

Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By Passion driven;
But yet the *light* that led astray
Was *light* from heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of *Coila's* plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with *Thomson's* landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With *Shenstone's* art;
Or pour, with *Gray*, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows:
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not *Potosi's* mine,
Nor kings' regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A *rustic Bard.*

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve *the dignity of Man,*
With soul erect;
And trust *the Universal Plan*
Will all protect.

"*And wear thou this,*"—she solemn said,
And bound the *Holly* round my head;
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID,
OR THE
RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither;
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
The Rigid Wise anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
Sae ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin.—
SOLOMON.—Eccles. ch. vii. ver. 16.

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heapet happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ?
Discount what scant occasion gave
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It makes an unco lee-way.

See social life and glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmogrified, they're grown
Debauchery and drinking:
O would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
Damnation of expenses!

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Ty'd up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor *frailty* names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination—
But let me whisper i' your lug,
Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human;

One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis *He* alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring—its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*.

TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY

An honest man's the noblest work of God.—POPE.

HAS auld K——— seen the deil!
Or great M'——— thrawn his heel?
Or R———again grown weel
To preach an' read?
'Na, waur than a'!' cries ilka chiel,
'*Tam Samson's* dead!'

K——— lang may grunt an' grane,
An' sigh, an' sab' an' greet her lane,
An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, and wean,
In mourning weed;
To death, she's dearly paid the kane,
Tam Samson's dead!

The brethren of the mystic *level*,
May hing their head in woefu' bevel,
While by their nose the tears will revel,
Like ony head!
Death's gien the lodge an unco devel,
Tam Samson's dead!

When winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire like a rock;
When to the lochs the curlers flock,
Wi' gleesome speed;
Wha will they station at the *cock*?
Tam Samson's dead!

He was the king o' a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink, like *Jehu* roar,
In time o' need;
But now he lags on death's *hog-score*,
Tam Samsom's dead!

Now safe the stately sawmont sail,
And trouts bedropp'd wi' crimsom hail,
And eels weel kenn'd for souple tail,
And geds for greed,
Since dark in death's *fish-creel* we wail,
Tam Samson dead!

Rejoice, ye birring paitricks a';
Ye cootie moorcocks, crousely craw;
Ye maukins, cock your fud fu' braw,
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa',
Tam Samson's dead!

That waefu' morn be ever mourn'd,
Saw him in shootin' graith adorn'd,
While pointers round impatient burn'd
Frae couples freed!
But, och! he gaed and ne'er return'd!
Tam Samson's dead!

In vain auld age his body batters;
In vain the gout his ancles fetters;
In vain the burns came down like waters
An acre braid!
Now ev'ry auld wife greetin', clatters,
Tam Samson's dead!

Owre mony a weary hag he limpit,
An' aye the tither shot he thumpit,
Till coward death behind him jumpit
Wi deadly feide;
Now he proclaims wi' tout o' trumpet,
Tam Samson's dead!

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reel'd his wonted bottle-swagger,
But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;
'L—d, five!' he cry'd, an' owre did stagger;
Tam Samson's dead!

Ilk hoary hunter mourn'd a brither;
Ilk sportsman youth bemoan'd a father;
Yon auld grey stane, amang the heather,
Marks out his head,
Whare *Burns* has wrote, in rhyming blether,
Tam Samson's dead!

There low he lies, in lasting rest:
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch an' breed;
Alas! nae mair he'll them molest!
Tam Samson's dead.

When August winds the heather wave,
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three volleys let his mem'ry crave
O pouther an' lead,
Till Echo answer frae her cave,
Tam Samson's dead!

Heav'n rest his saul, whare'er he be
Is th' wish o' mony mae than me:
He had twa fauts, or may be three,
Yet what remead?

Ae social, honest man, want we:
Tam Samson's dead!

THE EPITAPH.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting zealots, spare him!
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye'll mend or ye won near him.

PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, and canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' *Killie*,
Tell every social, honest billie,
To cease his grievin',
For yet unskaith'd by death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's livin'.

HALLOWEEN.

Yes! let the rich deride, the poor disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.

Upon that night, when fairies light,
On *Cassilis Downans* dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for *Colean* the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams!
There up the *cove*,* to stray an' rove
Amang the rocks and streams,
To sport that night.

Amang the bonnie winding banks
Where *Doon* rins, wimplin', clear,
Where Bruce ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook his *Carrick* spear,
Some merry, friendly, countra folks,
Together did convene,
To *burn* their nits, an' *pou* their stocks,
An' haud their *Halloween*
Fu' blithe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blithe, fu' sweetly kythe,
Hearts leal, an', warm, an' kin':
The lads sae trig wi' wooer-babs,
Weel knotted on their garten,
Some unco blate, and some wi' gabs,
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'
Whyles fast at night.

Then first and foremost, thro' the kail,
Their *stocks* maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' graip, an' wale,
For muckle anes and straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
An' wander'd thro' the *bow-kail*,
An' pou't for want o' better shift,
A *runt* was like a sow-tail,
Sae bow't that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
The vera wee things, todlin', rin
Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther;
An' gif the *custoc's* sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
Syne coziely, aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care, they've plac'd them
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang then a'
To pou their *stalks o' corn*;
But Rab slips out, and jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn;
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
But her *tap-pickle* maist was lost,
When kiuttlin' in the fause-house
Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's weel-hoordet *nits*
Are round an' round divided,
And monie lads and lasses' fates,
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthy side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some smart awa' wi' saucy pride,
An' jump out-owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e;
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
She says in to hersel':
He bleez'd owre her, and she owre him,
As they wad never mair part;
Till fuff! he started up the lum,
An' Jean had e'en a sair heart
To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his *bow-kail runt*,
Was *brunt* wi' primsie Mallie;
An' Mallie, nae doubt, took the drunt,
To be compar'd to Willie;
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
An' her ain fit it brunt it;

While Willie lap, and swoor by *jing*,
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
She pits hersel' an' Rob in;
In lovin' bleeze they sweetly join,
Till white in ase they're sobbin':
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view,
She whisper'd Rob to seek for't:
Rob, stowlins prie'd her bonnie mou,
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks,
And slips out by hersel':
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins graipit for the bauks,
And in the *blue clue* thraws then,
Right fear't that night.

An' aye she win't, an' ay she swat,
I wat she made nae jaukin;
Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quakin'!
But whether 'twas the Deil himsel',
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en,
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin'
To spier that night.

Wee Jenny to her Graunie says,
"Will ye go wi' me graunie?
I'll *eat the apple at the glass*,
I gat frae Uncle Johnnie:"
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notic'd na, an aizle brunt
Her braw new worset apron
Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
How daur ye try sic sportin',
As seek the foul Thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune:
Nae doubt but ye may get a *sight!*
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For monie a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' di'd deleeret
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,
I mind't as weel's yestreen,
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
was na past fyfteen:

The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green:
An' aye a rantin kirn we gat,
An' just on *Halloween*
It fell that night.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow;
He's sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That liv'd in Achmacalla:
He gat *hemp-seed*, I mind it weel,
An' he made unco light o't;
But monie a day was *by himsel'*,
He was sae sairly frighted
That vera night."

Then up gat fetchtin' Jamie Fleck,
An' he swoor by his conscience,
That he could *saw hemp-seed* a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense!
The auld guid-man raught down the pock,
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin,
The *graip* he for a *harrow* taks,
An' haurls at his curpin:
An' every now an' then he says,
"Hemp-seed I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, and draw thee,
As fast this night."

He whistl'd up Lord Lennox' march,
To keep his courage cheery:
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld cam rinnin' out,
To hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but *Grumphie*
A steer that night!

Meg fain wad to the *barn* hae gane,
To *win three wechts o' naething;*

But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in;
She gies the herd a pickle nits,
An' twa red cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the *barn* she sets
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',
Syne bauldly in she enters;
A *ratton* rattled up the wa'
An' she cry'd, L—d preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
Fu' fast that night,

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;
Then hecht him some fine braw ane;
It chanc'd the *stack* he *faddom'd thrice*,
Was timmer-propt for thrawin';
He taks a swirlie auld moss-oak,
For some black, grousome carlin;
An' loot a wince, an' drew a stroke,
Till skin in blypes cam haurlin'
Aff's nieves that night.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kitten;
But Och! that night, amang the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin',
Whare *thrae lairds' lands met at a burn*,
To dip her left sark sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night.

Amang the brackens, on the brae,
Between her an' the moor,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' gae a croon;
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Ne'er lavrock height she jumpet,
But mist a fit, an' in the *pool*
Out owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The *luggies* three are ranged,
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,
To see them duly changed;
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' *Mar's-year* did desire,
Because he gat the toom-dish thrice,
He heav'd them on the fire,
In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary;
An' unco tales, and funnie jokes,
Their sports were cheap an' cheery;
Till *butter'd so'ns*, wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a-steerin';
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin'
Fu' blithe that night.

THE

AULD FARMER'S

NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS

AULD MARE MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR.

A *Guid New-year* I wish thee Maggie!
Hae, there's a *ripp* to thy auld baggie:
Tho' thou's howe-backit, now an' knaggie,
I've seen the day,
Thou could hae gaen like onie staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, and crazy,
An' thy auld hide's as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, an' glaizie,
A bonnie gray:
He should been tight that daur't to *raize* thee,
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A *filly* buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank
As e'er tred yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,
Like onie bird.

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid father's *meere*,
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

Whan first I gaed to woo my *Jenny*,
Ye then was trottin' wi' your minnie;
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie,
But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie
An' unco sonsie.

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie *bride:*
An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could bragged wide,
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte an' hobble,
An' wintle like a samount-coble,
That day ye was a jinker noble,
For heels an' win'!
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,
Far, far behin'.

When thou an' I were young and skeigh,
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
An' tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abeigh,
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow:
At *Brooses* thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed;
And ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle,
An gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, 'but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazel.

Thou was a noble *fittie-lan'*,
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn;
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,
On guid March weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't an' fetch't, an' fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith an' pow'r,
Till spritty knowes wad rair't an' risket,
An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,

I gied my *cog* a wee bit heap
A boon the timmer:
I ken'd my *Maygie* wadna sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it;
Thou never lap, and sten't, and breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa.

My *pleugh* is now thy bairn-time a':
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa,
That thou hast nurst.
They drew me thretteen pund and twa,
The vera warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa had wrought,
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' monie an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

An' think na, my auld, trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin',
An' thy auld days may end in starvin',
For my last *fou*,
A heapit *stimpart*, I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyt about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na' start awa sa hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring *pattle!*

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
And justifies that ill opinion
That makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion
An' *fellow-mortal!*

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!

A *daimen icher* in a *thrave*
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit *housie*, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
An' naethin' now to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin'
Baith snell and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel *coulter* past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves and stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving *foresight* may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' *mice* an' men,
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' *me!*
The *present* only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects dear:
An' forward, though I canna *see*,
I *guess* an' *fear*.

A WINTER NIGHT.

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfitted sides,
Your loup'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these?—SHAKESPEAR.

When biting *Boreas*, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers through the leafless bow'r;
When *Phœbus* gi'es a short-liv'd glowr
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning through the flaky show'r
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor labour sweet in sleep was locked,

While burns wi' snawy wreaths up chocked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or through the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.

List'ning, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, who bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And through the drift, deep-lairing sprattle
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That in the merry month o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now *Phœbe*, in her midnight rein,
Dark muffled, view'd the dreary plain:
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain,
Slow solemn stole—

'Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, ye bitter-biting frost;
Descend ye chilling, smothering snows;
Not all your rage, as now, united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than heaven illumin'd man on brother man bestows!
See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, Want, and Murder o'er the land!
Even in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth weeping, tells a mournful tale,
How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefin'd,
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.
Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,

With lordly Honour's lofty brow,
The powers ye proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love pretending snares,
This boasting Honour turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears, and unaviling pray'rs!
Perhaps, this hour, in Mis'ry's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a Mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!
Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown;
Ill satisfy'd keen Nature's clam'rous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays himself to sleep,
While thro' the rugged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drifty heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where guilt and poor misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushed low
By cruel Fortune's undeserved blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!'

I heard nae mair, for *Chanticleer*
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impressed my mind—
Thro' all his works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind,
The most resembles God.

EPISTLE TO DAVIE.

A BROTHER POET.

January ——

WHILE winds fra aff *Ben-Lomond* blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlan' jingle,
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great folk's gift,
That live sa bein and snug:

I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fireside;
But hanker and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r
To keep at times frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
An' ken na how to wair't:
But, *Davie*, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear,
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
'Mair speir na, nor fear na'
Auld age ne'er mind a feg,
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only for to beg.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then, content could make us blest;
E'en then sometimes we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness
The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile
However fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile;
And mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma':
Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae farther can we fa'.

What though like commoners of air,
We wander out we know not where,
But either house or hall?
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear.
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year,
On braes when we please, then,
We'll sit and sowth a tune;
Syne *rhyme* till't, we'll time till't,
And sing't when we hae done.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in making muckle *mair*;
It's no in books; it's no in lear,
To mak us truly blest!

If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The *heart* aye's the part aye,
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive through wet an' dry,
Wi' never ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how oft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless and fearless
Of either heav'n or hell;
Esteeming and deeming
It's a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel';
They make us see the naked truth,
The *real* guid and ill.
Tho' losses and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, *Davie*, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught else wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest;)
This life has joys for you and I!
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
And joys the very best,
There's a' *the pleasures o' the heart*,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye have your *Meg*, your dearest part,
And I my darling *Jean*.
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her *name*:
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame!

O all ye Powers who rule above!
O *Thou*, whose very self art *love*,

Thou knowest my words sincere !
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear !
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou *Being*, All-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r ;
Still take her, and make her,
Thy most peculiar care !

All hail, ye tender feelings dear !
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow ;
Long since this world's thorny ways
Had numbered out my weary days,
Had it not been for you !
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
In every care and ill ;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My *Davie* or my *Jean*.

O, how that *name* inspires my style ?
The words come skelpin' rank and file,
Amaist before I ken !
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
Were glow'rin owre my pen.
My spaviet *Pegasus* will limp,
Till ance he's fairly het ;
And then he'll hitch, and stilt, and jimp,
An' rin an unco fit ;
But lest then, the beast then,
Should rue his hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty wizen'd hide.

THE LAMENT.

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.

Alas ! how oft does Goodness wound itself,
And sweet Affection prove the spring of woe !—HOME.

O THOU pale orb that silent shines,
While care untroubled mortals sleep !
Thou seest a wretch that inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep ?
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan unwarming beam ;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How *life* and *love* are all a dream.

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly marked distant hill:
I joyless view thy trembling horn
Reflected on the gurgling rill:
My fondly fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy power, Remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning peace!

No idly feign'd poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame;
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft-attested Powers above;
The *promised Father's tender name;*
These were the pledges of my love!

Encircled in her clasping arms,
How have the raptur'd moments flown!
How have I wish'd for Fortune's charms,
For her dear sake, and her's alone!
And must I think it? is she gone,
My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
And is she ever, ever lost!

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
So lost to honour, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
The plighted husband of her youth!
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
Her way may lie through rough distress!
Then, who her pangs and pains will sooth?
Her sorrows share, and make them less?

Ye winged hours that o'er us past,
Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast,
My fondly treasur'd thoughtse mploy'd.
That breast how dreary now, and void,
For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n every ray of hope destroy'd,
And not a wish to gild the gloom!

The morn that warns the approaching day,
Awakes me up to toil and woe:
I see the hours in long array,
That I must suffer, lingering, slow.
Full many a pang, and may a throe,
Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
Shall kiss the distant, western main.

And when my nightly couch I try,
Sore-harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:

if I slumber, fancy, chief,
Reigns haggard wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day, all bitter, brings relief,
From such a horror-breathing night.

O! thou bright queen, who o'er th' expanse
Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
Observ'd us fondly wandering, stray:
The time, unheeded, sped away,
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
To mark the mutual kindling eye.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes, never, never, to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I'll wander thro';
And hopeless, comfortless I'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow.

DESPONDENCY.

AN ODE.

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I sit me down and sigh;
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning scenes appear!
What sorrows *yet* may pierce me thro'
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er
But with the closing tomb!

Happy, ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!
Ev'n when the wished *ends* deny'd,
Yet while the busy *means* are ply'd,
They bring their own reward:
Whilst I, a hope abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an *aim*,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night,
And joyless morn the same;
You, bustling, and justling,
Forget each grief and pain:
I, listless, yet restless,
Find ev'ry prospect vain.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell,
The cavern wild with tangling roots,
Sits o'er his newly gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint collected dream;
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

Than I, no lonely hermit placed
Where never human footstep traced,
Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And *just* to stop, and *just* to move,
With self-respecting art:
But ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The *Solitary* can despise,
Can want, and yet be blest!
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate,
Whilst I here must cry here,
At perfidy ingrate!

Oh! enviable, early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care, to guilt unknown!
How ill exchanged for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
Of others, or my own:
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish!
The losses, the crosses,
That active men engage!
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim declining *age!*

WINTER.

A DIRGE.

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;

And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join,
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou *Power Supreme*, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they *must* be best,
Because they are *Thy* Will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to *enjoy* thou dost deny,
Assist me to *resign*.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO R. AITKEN, ESQ.

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

My loved, my honour'd, much respected friend,
No mercenary bard his homage pays:
With honest pride I scorn each selfish end:
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple *Scottish* lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aitken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sough;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn *Cotter* frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant *wee things*, toddlin, stacher thro'
To meet their Dad, wi' flichterin' noise and glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie *wifie's* smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,

Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

Belyve the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out amang the farmers roun',
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town;
Their eldest hope, their *Jenny*, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparklin' in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to show a bra' new gown,
Or deposit her sair-won penny fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view,
The *mother*, wi' her needle an' her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The *father* mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
'And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
And ne'er tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play;
An' O! be sure to fear the LORD alway!
An' mind your *duty*, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore his counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!'

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door,
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convey her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in *Jenny's* e'e, and flush her cheek;
Wi' heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
While *Jenny* hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears it's nae wild worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome *Jenny* brings him ben;
A strappin youth; he taks the mother's e'e;
Blithe *Jenny* sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel pleas'd to think her *bairn's* respected like the lave.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary *mortal round*,
And sage *experience* bids me this declare—
'If Heav'n a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,

One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet *Jenny's* unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child!
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome *parritch*, chief o' *Scotia's* food:
The sowpe their only *Hawkie* does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big *ha'-Bible*, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare:
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And '*Let us worship* GOD!' he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise;
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name:
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heav'n-ward flame,
The sweetest far of *Scotia's* holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How *Abram* was the *friend of* GOD on high;
Or, *Moses* bade eternal warfare wage
With *Amalek's* ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal bard* did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or, *Job's* pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt *Isaiah's* wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the *Christian volume* is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;

How *He*, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How *he*, who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great *Bab'lon's* doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their *Creator's* praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace except the *heart!*
The *Pow'r* incensed the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleased, the language of the soul:
And in his *book of life* the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent pair their *secret homage* pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That *He* who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with *grace divine* preside.

From scenes like these old *Scotia's* grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings
"An honest man's the noblest work of GOD!"
And *certes*, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,
Th *ccottage* leaves the *palace* far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp! a cumbrous load
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O *Scotia*! my dear, my native soil
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, O! may Heav'n their simple lives prevent
From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile:
Then, however *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,

A *virtuous populace* may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved *Isle*.

O *Thou!* who pour'd the patriotic tide,
That stream'd thro' *Wallace's* undaunted heart:
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's *God*, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, *Scotia's* realm desert;
But still the *patriot* and the *patriot bard*,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of *Ayr*,
I spy'd a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

Young stranger, whither wand'rst thou?
Began the rev'rend sage;
Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain
Or youthful pleasure's rage!
Or, haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me to mourn
The miseries of man!

The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
W haughty lordling's pride;
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs
That man was made to mourn.

O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Misspending all thy precious hours:
Thy glorious youthful prime;
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives Nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported in his right:

But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn,
Then age and want, Oh! ill-match'd pair!
Show man was made to mourn.

A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's lap carest;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, Oh! what crowds in every land,
Are wretched and forlorn;
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

Many and sharp the num'rous ills,
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.

See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly *fellow-worm*
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn?

Yet let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human kind
Is surely not the *last!*
The poor, oppressed, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

O Death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest,
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn:
But Oh! a blest relief to those
That, weary-laden, mourn!

A PRAYER.

IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

O THOU unknown Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun:
As *something* loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong,

Where human *weakness* has come short,
Or *frailty* stept aside,
Do thou *All Good!* for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with *intention* I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But *Thou art good;* and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

STANZAS

ON THE SAME OCCASION.

WHY am I loath to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewed storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms:
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry GOD,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's sway;
Again in folly's path might go astray;
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea;
With that controlling pow'r assist ev'n me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line!
O aid me with thy help, *Omnipotence Divine!*

LYING AT A REVEREND FRIEND'S HOUSE ONE NIGHT, THE AUTHOR LEFT THE FOLLOWING

VERSES,

IN THE ROOM WHERE HE SLEPT.

O THOU dread Pow'r, who reign'st above,
I know thou wilt me hear,
When for this scene of peace and love,
I make my prayer sincere.

The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,
Long, long be pleased to spare,
To bless his little filial flock,
And show what good men are.

She, who her lovely offspring eyes
With tender hopes and fears,
O bless her with a mother's joys,
But spare a mother's tears!

Their hope, their stay, their darling youth,
In manhood's dawning blush;
Bless him, thou God of love and truth,
Up to a parent's wish!

The beauteous, seraph sister-band,
With earnest tears I pray,
Thou know'st the snares on ev'ry hand,
Guide thou their steps alway!

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driv'n,
May they rejoice, no wand'rer lost,
A family in Heav'n!

THE FIRST PSALM.

THE man, in life, wherever placed,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his GOD.

That man shall flourish like the trees
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that GOD, the good adore,
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

A PRAYER

UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

O THOU Great Being; what thou art
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure am I, that known to thee
Are all thy works below.

Thy creature here before thee stands;
All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey thy high behest.

Sure thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
O free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
To bear and not repine.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF

THE NINETIETH PSALM.

O THOU, the first, the greatest Friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling-place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath thy forming hand,
Before this pond'rous globe itself
Arose at thy command;

That pow'r which rais'd, and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time,
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years,
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before thy sight,
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou gav'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought:
Again thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought."

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonny *Lark*, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble, birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield
But thou beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie *stibble-field*,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless Maid,
Sweet *floweret* of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple Bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd,
Unskilful he to note the card
Of *prudent lore*,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to *suffering worth* is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink,
Till wrench'd of every stay but *Heaven*,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date:
Stern Ruin's *plough-share* drives, elate
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

TO RUIN.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word,
The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimed dart;
For one has cut my *dearest tie*,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring and pouring,
The *storm* no more I dread;
Tho' thick'ning and black'ning,
Round my devoted head.

And thou grim power, by life abhorr'd
While life a *pleasure* can afford,
Oh! hear a wretch's prayer:
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign life's *joyless* day;
My weary heart its throbbings cease,
Cold mouldering in the clay?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face;
Enclasped, and grasped
Within thy cold embrace!

TO MISS L——,

WITH BEATTIE'S POEMS, AS A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT, JAN. 1, 1787.

Again the silent wheels of time
Their annual round have driv'n,
And you, tho' scarce in maiden prime,
Are so much nearer Heav'n.

No gifts have I from Indian coasts,
The infant year to hail;
I send you more than India boasts
In *Edwin's* simple tale.

Our sex with guile and faithless love
Is charg'd, perhaps, too true:
But may, dear maid, each lover prove
An *Edwin* still to you!

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

MAY ——, 1786.

I LANG hae thought, my youthfu' Friend,
A something to have sent you,
Though it should serve nae other end
Than just a kind *memento;*
But how the subject theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.

Ye'll try the warld soon, my lad,
And, *Andrew*, dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye;
For care and trouble set your thought,
E'en when yout end's attained;
An' a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

I'll no say men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked:
But och, mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If *self* the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted;

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we should na censure,
For still the *important end* of life
They equally may answer;
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neebor's part,
Yet hae nae *cash* to spare him.

Aye free aff han' your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel'
Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel' as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' every other man,
Wi' sharpen'd sly inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' *illicit rove*,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I wave the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing,
But och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by every wile,
That's justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being *independent.*

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order;
But where you feel your *honour* grip,
Let that aye be your border;
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

The great *Creator* to revere,
Must sure become the *creature;*
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An Atheist's laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded!
Or, if she gie a *random sting,*
It may be little minded:
But when on life we're tempest driv'n,
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n,
Is sure a noble *anchor.*

Adieu, dear amiable youth,
Your heart can ne'er be wanting;
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, 'God send you speed,'
Still daily to grow wiser:
And may you better reck the *rede,*
Than ever did th' adviser!

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

A' ye wha live by soups o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come mourn wi' me!
Our *billie's* gi'en us a' a jink,
An' owre the sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin' core,
Wha dearly like a random splore,

Nae mair he'll join the *merry roar*,
In social key;
For now he's ta'en anither shore,
An' owre the sea.

The bonnie lasses weel may miss him,
And in their dear *petitions* place him:
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him,
Wi' tearfu' e'e;
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him,
That's owre the sea.

O Fortune, they hae room to grumble!
Hadst thou ta'en aff, some drowsy bummel,
Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg as ony wumble,
That's owre the sea.

Auld, cantie *Kyle* may weepers wear,
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear:
'Twill mak' her poor auld heart, I fear,
In flinders flee;
He was her *laureate* monie a year,
That's owre the sea.

He saw misfortune's cauld *nor-west*
Lang mustering up a bitter blast:
A jillet brak' his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a berth afore the mast
An' owre the sea.

To tremble under Fortune's cummock,
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,
Wi' his proud independent stomach
Could ill agree;
So row't his hurdies in a *hammock*,
An' owre the sea.

He ne'er was gi'en to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was *under hiding*;
He dealt it free:
The muse was a' that he took pride in,
That's owre the sea.

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
An' hap him in a cozie biel:
Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
And fu' o' glee:
He wadna wrang'd the vera deil,
That's owre the sea.

Fareweel, my *rhyme composing billie*,
Your native soil was right ill-willie;
But ye may flourish like a lily,
Now bonnilie;
I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie,
Tho' owre the sea.

TO A HAGGIS.

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin-race.
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy of a *grace*
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your *pin* wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While thro' your pores the dews distill
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labour dight,
An' cut you up wi' ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright,
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch an' strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums:
Then auld guidman, maist like to ryve,
Bethankit hums.

Is there that o'er his French *ragout*,
Or *olio* that wad staw a sow,
Or *fricassee* wad mak her spew,
Wi' perfect sconner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view,
On sic a dinner?

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle-shank a guid whip lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the rustic, *haggis-fed*,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whissle;
An' legs, an' arms, an' heads will sned,
Like taps o' thrissle.

Ye Pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants na skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
Gie her a *Haggis!*

A DEDICATION.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Expect na, Sir, in this narration,
A fleechin, fleth'rin dedication,
To rooze you up, an' ca' you guid,
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid,
Because ye're surnamed like his Grace,
Perhaps related to the race;
Then when I'm tired—and sae are ye,
Wi' mony a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face, how I stop short,
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, Sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the great folk for a wamefu';
For me! sae laigh I needna bow,
For, Lord be thankit, I can plough
And when I dinna yoke a naig,
Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg;
Sae I shall say, and that's nae flatt'rin',
It's just sic poet an' sic patron.

The Poet, some guid angel help him,
Or else, I fear some ill ane skelp him;
He may do weel for a' he's done yet,
But only he's no just begun yet.

The Patron, (Sir, ye maun forgie me,
I winna lie, come what will o' me)
On ev'ry hand it will allowed be,
He's just—nae better than he should be.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want;
What's no his ain he winna tak it,
What ance he says he winna break it;
Ought he can lend he'll no refuse't,
Till aft his goodness is abused;
And rascals whyles that do him wrang,
Ev'n *that*, he does na mind it lang;
As master, landlord, husband, father,
He does nae fail his part in either.

But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;
Nae *godly symptom* ye can ca' that;
It's naething but a milder feature,
Of our poor, sinfu' corrupt nature;
Ye'll get the best o' moral works,
Mang black Gentoos and Pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on *Ponotaxi*
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.
That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The *gentleman* in word and deed,
It's no thro' terror of damnation;
It's just a carnal inclination.

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!

Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
In *moral* mercy, truth, and justice !

No, stretch a point to catch a plack ;
Abuse a brother to his back ;
Steal thro a *winnock* frae a wh--re,
But point the rake that taks the *door :*
Be to the poor like onie whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane ;
Ply ev'ry art o' *legal* thieving ;
No matter, stick to *sound believing.*

Learn three mile pray'rs, an half-mile graces,
Wi' weel-spread looves, an' lang wry faces ;
Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,
An damn a' parties but your own ;
I'll warrant then, ye're nae deceiver,
A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

O ye wha leave the springs of Calvin
For *gumlie dubs* of your ain delvin !
Ye sons of heresy and error,
Ye'll some day squeel in quaking terror !
When vengeance draws the sword in wrath,
And in the fire throws the sheath ;
When ruin with his sweeping *besom,*
Just frets till Heav'n commission gies him :
While o'er the *harp* pale Misery moans,
And strikes the ever-deep'ning tones,
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans !

Your pardon, Sir, for this digression,
I maist forgat my *dedication ;*
But when divinity comes cross me,
My readers still are sure to lose me.

So, Sir, ye see 'twas nae daft vapour,
But I maturely thought it proper,
When a' my works I did review,
To dedicate them, Sir, to *You :*
Because (ye needna tak it ill)
I thought them something like yoursel'.

Then patronize them wi' your favour,
And your petitioner shall ever—
I had amaist said *ever pray,*
But that's a word I need na say :
For prayin' I hae little skill o't ;
I'm baith dead-sweer, an' wretched ill o't ;
But I'se repeat each poor man's *pray'r,*
That kens or hears about you, Sir—

"May ne'er misfortune's gowling bark,
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the *Clerk !*
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart
For that same gen'rous spirit smart !
May K———'s far honour'd name
Lang beet his hymeneal flame,

Till H———s at least a dizen,
Are frae her nuptial labours risen:
Five bonnie lasses round their table,
And seven braw fellows, stout an' able
To serve their king and country weel,
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the evening o' his days:
Till his wee curlie *John's* ier-oe,
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow!"

I will not mind a lang conclusion,
Wi' complimentary effusion;
But whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest wi' Fortune's smiles and favours,
I am, dear Sir, with zeal most fervent,
Your much indebted humble servant.

But if (which Pow'rs above prevent!)
That iron-hearted carl, *Want*,
Attended in his grim advances,
By sad mistakes, and black mischances,
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your *humble servant* then no more;
For who would humbly serve the poor!
But by a poor man's hopes in Heaven!
While recollection's power is given,
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I, thro' the tender gushing tear,
Should recognize my *master dear*,
If friendless low we meet together,
Then, Sir, your hand—my *friend and brother*.

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin' ferlie?
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho' faith, I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,
How dare you set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner,
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle;
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
Wi' ither kindred, jumpin' cattle,
In shoals and nations:

Whare *horn* nor *bane* ne'er dare unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rils, snug an' tight:
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right
Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost height tow'ring height
O' *Miss's bonnet.*

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out
As plump and grey as onie grozet;
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red smeddum,
I'd gi'e you sic a hearty dose o't,
Wad dress your droddum!

I wad na been surprised to spy
You on an auld wife's flannen toy;
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
On's wyliecoat;
But Miss's fine *Lunardie*, fie,
How dare ye do't!

O *Jenny*, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie's makin',
Thae *winks* and *finger ends*, I dread,
Are notice takin'!

O wad some power the giftie gie us
To *see oursels as others see us!*
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n Devotion!

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH.

EDINA! *Scotia's* darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly scatter'd flowers,
As on the banks of *Ayr* I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

Here wealth still swells the golden tide,
As busy trade his labours plies;
There architecture's noble pride
Bids elegance and splendour rise;
Here justice, from her native skies,
High wields her balance and her rod;
There learning, with his eagle eyes,
Seeks science in her coy abode.

Thy sons, EDINA, social, kind,
With open arms the stranger hail

Their views enlarged, their liberal mind,
Above the narrow, rural vale;
Attentive still to sorrow's wail,
Or modest merit's silent claim;
And never may their sources fail!
And never envy blot their name.

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn!
Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
Dear as the raptured thrill of joy!
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heav'ns beauties on my fancy shine:
I see the *sire of love on high*,
And own his work indeed divine!

There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough rude fortress gleams afar:
Like some bold veteran grey in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:
The pon'drous wall and massy bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock:
Have oft withstood assailing war,
And oft repell'd th' invader's shock.

With awe-struck thought and pitying tears,
I view that noble, stately dome,
Where *Scotia's* kings of other years,
Famed heroes, had their royal home
Alas! how changed the times to come!
Their royal name low in the dust;
Their hapless race wild-wand'ring roam!
Tho' rigid law cries out, 'twas just!

Wild beats my heart to trace your steps,
Whose ancestors in days of yore,
Thro' hostile ranks and ruin'd gaps
Old *Scotia's* bloody lion bore:
E'en *I* who sing in rustic lore,
Haply *my sires* have left their shed,
And faced grim danger's loudest roar,
Bold following where *your* fathers led!

Edina! *Scotia's* darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!
From marking wildly scatter'd flowers,
As on the banks of *Ayr* I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter'd in thy honour'd shade.

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD, APRIL 1ST, 1785.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin loud at e'en

An' morning poussie whiddin seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an *unknown* frien'
I pray excuse.

On fasten-een we had a rockin'
To ca' the crack, and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle fun and jokin',
Ye need na doubt:
At length we had a hearty yokin'
At *sang about.*

There was ae *sang* amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought described sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, 'Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?'
They tald me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About *Muirkirk.*

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear't,
And sae about him there I spiert,
Then a' that ken't him, round declared
He had *ingine,*
That name excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel',
Or witty catches,
'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh an' graith,
Or die a cadger pownie's death,
At some dyke back,
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith
To hear your crack.

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the *crambo jingle* fell,
Tho' rude an' rough,
Yet crooning to a body's sel'
Does weel eneugh.

I am na *poet,* in a sense,
But just a *rhymer,* like, by chance,
An, hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly *verse* frae *prose*,
To mak a *sang?*'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're may be wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools,
If honest nature made you *fools*,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They *gang* in stirks, and *come out* asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' *Allan's* glee,
Or *Ferguson's*, the bauld and slee,
Or bright *Lapraik's*, my friend to be
If I can hit it!
That would be lear eneugh for me!
If I could get it.

Now, Sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends, I b'lieve, are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,
I'se no insist,
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel;
As ill I like my faults to tell;
But friends, and folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me.
Tho' I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

There's ae *wee faut* they whyles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Guid forgie me!
For monie a plack they wheedle frae me
At dance or fair;
May be some *ither thing* they gie me
They weel can spare.

But *Mauchline* race, or *Mauchline* fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather,

An' hae a swap o' *rhyming-ware*
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water;
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa, ye selfish warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace,
Ev'n love and friendship should give place
To *catch the plack!*
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
'Each aid the others,
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!'

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle:
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing, or whissle,
Your friend and servant.

TO THE SAME.

APRIL 21, 1785.

WHILE new ca'd kye rout at the stake,
An' pownies reek in pleugh or brake,
This hour on e'ening's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor
To honest-hearted auld *Lapraik*,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, with weary legs,
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs
Their ten hours bite,
My awkart-muse sair pleads and begs,
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeel'd hizzie,
She's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she, 'Ye ken ye've been sae busy
This month an' mair,
That troth my head is grown right dizzie,
An' something sair.'

Her dowff excuses pat me mad;
'Conscience,' says I, 'ye thowless jad!
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud,
This vera night;

So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

'Shall bauld *Laprail'k* the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts,
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
An' thank him kindly !'

Sae I gat paper in a blink,
An' down gaed *stumpie* in the ink :
Quoth I, 'Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it ;
An' if ye winna mak' it clink,
By Jove I'll prose it !'

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let us mak proof ;
But I shall scribble down some blether
Just clean aff loof.

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your *moorland harp*
Wi' gleesome touch !
Ne'er mind how Fortune *waft* and *warp* :
She's but a b-tch.

She's gien me monie a jirt and fleg,
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig ;
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg,
Wi' lyart pow,
I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow !

No comes the sax and twentieth simmer,
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer,
Frae year to year :
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer,
I, Rob, am here.

Do you envy the city *Gent,*
Behint a kist to lie and sklent,
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent per cent,
And muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A *Bailie's* name ?

Or is't the paughty feudal thane,
Wi' ruffled sark and glancin' cane,
Wha thinks himself nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks.
While caps an' bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks ;

'O *Thou* wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit and sense a lift,
Then turn me if *Thou* please adrift
Thro' Scotland wide:
Wi' cits nor lairds I would not shift,
In a' their pride!'

Were this the *charter* of our state,
'On pain o' hell be rich and great,'
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But thanks to Heav'n! that's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
'The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils *Great Nature's plan*,
An' none but *he!*

O mandate glorious and divine!
The followers o' the ragged Nine,
Poor glorious devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an growl,
Their worthless nievefu' o' a soul
May in some future carcase howl
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light

Then may *Lapraik* and *Burns* arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And *sing* their pleasures, hopes, and joys,
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties,
Each passing year,

TO W. S——N,

OCHILTREE.

May 1785.

I GAT your letter, winsome *Willie*:
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun say't I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie,
Your flatterin' strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it.
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire sidelins sklented
On my poor musie;
Tho' in sic phrasin' terms ye've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,
Should I but dare a *hope* to speel,
Wi' *Allan* or wi' *Gilbertfield*,
The braes of fame;
Or *Fergusson* the writer chiel,
A deathless name.

(O *Fergusson!* thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry musty arts,
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh Gentry!
The tithe o' what ye waste at cartes,
Wad stow'd his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed,
As whyles they're like to be my dead,
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my *rustic reed*;
It gies me ease.

Auld *Coila* now may fidge fu' fain,
She's gotten poets o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays,
Till echoes all resound again
Her well sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measured style;
She lay like some unkenned of isle
Besides *New-Holland*,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth *Magellan*.

Ramsay an' famous *Fergusson*
Gied *Forth* an' *Tay* a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' *Tweed* to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While *Irwin*, *Lugar*, *Ayr*, an' *Doon*,
Nae body sings.

Th' *Illissus*, *Tiber*, *Thames*, an' *Seine*,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu line!
But, *Willie* set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams and burnies shine
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld *Coila's* plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious *Wallace*
Aft bure the gree as story tells,
Frae southren billies.

At *Wallace'* name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By *Wallace'* side,

Still pressing onward, red wat shod,
Or glorious died.

O sweet are *Coila's* haughs an woods,
When lintwhites chant among the buds,
An' jinking hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry !

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree,
Or frost on hills of *Ochiltree*
Are hoary grey ;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day !

O *Nature !* a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms !
Whether the summer kindly warms
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night !

The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander
An' no think lang,
O sweet, to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang !

The warly race may drudge and drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch, an' strive,
Let me fair *Nature's* face descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum o'er their treasure.

Fareweel, ' my rhyme-composing brither !'
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither,
Now let us lay our heads thegither.
In love fraternal :
May *Envy* wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal.

While highlandmen hate tolls and taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;
While terra firma on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith and practice,
In *Robert Burns.*

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen,
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this *new-light*,
'Bout which our *herds* sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

Yon *sang*, ye'll sen't wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing!
I've play'd mysel a bonnie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gaen and sair'd the king
At *Bunker's Hill*.

'Twas ae night lately in my fun
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,
An' brought a *paitrick* to the grun,
A bonnie hen,
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for't;
But, deil-ma care!
Somebody tells the *poacher-court*
The hale affair.

Some auld us'd hands had ta'en a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
An' pay't the *fee*.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,
An' by my pouther an' my hail,
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear,
Thy *name* shall pay o'er moor an' dale,
For this, niest year.

As soon's the clockin' time is by,
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,
Lord, I'se hae sportin' by an' by,
For my gowd guinea:
Tho' I should herd the *buckskin* kye
For't in Virginia.

Trowth, they had meikle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame,
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a yellow George to claim,
An' thole their blethers!

It pits me aye as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair,
But *pennyworths* again is fair,
When time's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

JOHN BARLEYCORN.

A BALLAD.

THERE were three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
An' they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
And show'rs began to fall:
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.

The sultry suns of summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

The sober autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale:
His bending joints and drooping head,
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age!
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage,

They've ta'en a weapon long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee:
They ty'd him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heaved in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him further woe,
And still as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller used him worst of all,
For he crus'd him between two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

Yon *sang*, ye'll sen't wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing!
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Like a rogue for forgerie.

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They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

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With water to the brim,
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There let him sink or swim.

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To work him further woe,
And still as signs of life appear'd,
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The marrow of his bones;
But a miller used him worst of all,
For he crus'd him between two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
N'er fail in old Scotland!

A FRAGMENT.

Tune—"Gillicrankie."

When *Guildford* good our pilot stood,
And did our helm thraw, man,
Ae naight, at tea, began a plea,
Within *America*, man:
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,
And in the sea did jaw, man;
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then thro' the lakes *Montgomery* takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man:
Down *Lowrie's burn* he took a turn,
And *Carleton* did ca', man:
But yet, what reck, he, at *Quebec*,
Montgomery-like did fa', man;
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his enemies a', man.

Poor *Tammy Gage*, within a cage,
Was kept at *Boston ha'*, man;
Till *Willie Howe* took o'er the knowe
For *Philadelphia*, man;
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid Christian blood to draw, man;
But at *New-York*, wi' knife and fork,
Sir-loin he hacked sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,
Till *Fraser* brave did fa', man:
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In *Saratoga* shaw, man.
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,
An' did the buckskins claw, man;
But *Clinton's* glaive frae rust to save
He hung it to the wa', man.

Then *Montague*, an *Guildford* too,
Began to fear a' fa', man;
And *Sackville* doure, wha stood the stoure,
The German chief to thraw, man;

For Paddy *Burke*, like onie Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
An' *Charlie Fox* threw by the box,
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

Then *Rockingham* took up the game;
Till death did on him ca', man;
When *Shelburne* meek held up his cheek,
Conform to gospel law, man,
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
They did his measures thraw, man,
For *North* and *Fox* united stocks,
And bore him to the wa', man.

Then clubs an' hearts were *Charlie's* cartes,
He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace of *Indian* race,
Led him a sair *faux pas*, man:
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,
On *Chatham's boy* did ca', man;
And Scotland drew her pipe, an' blew,
"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"

Behind the throne then *Grenville's* gone,
A secret word or twa, man;
While slee *Dundas* arous'd the class
Be-north the Roman wa', man:
An' *Chatham's* wraith, in heavenly graith,
(Inspired bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes, cry'd, "*Willie*, rise!
Would I ha'e fear'd them a', man?"

But word an' blow, *North, Fox and Co.*
Gowff'd *Willie* like a ba', man,
Till *Suthrons* raise, and coost their claise
Behind him in a raw, man;
An' *Caledon* threw by the drone,
An' did her whittle draw, man;
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt and blood
To mak it guid in law, man.

* * * *

SONG.

"Corn Rigs are Bonnie."

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held awa to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed,
'Till tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed,
To see me thro' the barley.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down, wi' right good will
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I kent her heart was a' my ain;
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace
Her heart was beating rarely;
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moons and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She aye shall bless that happy night,
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinkin';
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin gear;
I hae been happy thinkin':
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.

CHORUS.

Corn rigs an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie;
Ill ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

SONG.

COMPOSED IN AUGUST.

TUNE—"I had a Horse, I had nae mair."

Now westlin' winds, and slaught'ring guns,
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
Amang the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells:
The plover loves the mountains:
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains:
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
Tyrannic man's dominion:
The sportsman's joy' the murd'ring cry,
The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

But *Peggy* dear, the ev'ning's clear,
Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
All fading green and yellow:
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of nature:
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And ev'ry happy creature.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and fondly prest,
Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer!

SONG.

Tune—"My Nannie, O."

Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows.
Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O
But I'll got my plaid and out I'll steal,
An' owre the hills to Nannie, O.

My Nannie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O;
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The opening gowan, wet wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
I'm welcome aye to Nannie, O.

My riches a' s' my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld Guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O;
But I'm as blithe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll take what Heaven will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nannie, O.

GREEN GROW THE RASHES.

A FRAGMENT.

CHORUS.

Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent amang the lasses, O!

THERE'S nought but care on every han',
In every hour that passes, O;
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

The warly race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' though at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O,
Green grow, &c.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' warly cares, an' warly men,
May a gae tapsalteerie, O.
Green grow, &c.

For you so douse, ye sneer at this,
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warld e'er saw,
He dearly loved the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O;
Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

* * * * * * *

SONG.

TUNE.—"Jockie's Grey Breeks."

AGAIN rejoicing Nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues,
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,
All freshly steep'd in morning dews.

CHORUS.

And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet, jet black, and it's like a hawk,
And it winna let a body be!

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the vi'lets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.
And maun I still, &c.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks,
But life to me's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks.
And maun I still, &c.

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And every thing is blest but I.
And maun I still, &c.

The shepherd steeks his faulding slap,
And owre the moorlands whistle shill,
Wi' wild, unequal, wandering step
I meet him on the dewy hill.
And maun I still, &c.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blithe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on fluttering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.
And maun I still, &c.

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When nature all is sad like me!

CHORUS.

And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e?
For it's jet black, and it's like a hawk,
*An' it winna let a body be.**

SONG.

TUNE.—"Roslin Castle."

THE gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul wi' rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The hunter now has left the moor,
The scatter'd coveys meet secure,
While here I wander prest wi' care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her ripening corn
By early Winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly:
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr.

* We cannot presume to alter any of the poems of our bard, and more especially those printed under his own direction; yet it is to be regretted that this chorus which is not his own composition, should be attached to these fine stanzas, as it perpetually interrupts the train of sentiment which they excite.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore :
Tho' death in every shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear :
But round my heart the ties are bound,
That heart transpierced with many a wound;
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear
To leave the bonnie banks of Ayr.

Farewell, old *Coila's* hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past unhappy loves !
Farewell, my friends, farewell, my foes !
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr !

SONG.

TUNE—"Gilderoy."

FROM thee, *Eliza*, I must go,
And from my native shore;
The cruel fates between us throw
A boundless ocean's roar,
But boundless oceans roaring wide,
Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
My heart and soul from thee.

Farewell, farewell, *Eliza* dear,
The maid that I adorn !
A boding voice is in mine ear,
We part to meet no more !
But the last throb that leaves my heart,
While death stands victor by,
That throb, *Eliza*, is thy part,
And thine that latest sigh !

THE FAREWELL,

TO THE BRETHREN OF ST. JAMES'S LODGE, TARBOLTON.

TUNE—"Good night and Joy be wi' you a' !"

ADIEU ! a heart-warm, fond adieu
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie !*
Ye favour'd, ye *enlighten'd* few,
Companions of my social joy !
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart, and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa'.

Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the cheerful festive night;
Oft honour'd with supreme command,
Presided o'er the *sons of light;*

And by that *hieroglyphic* bright,
Which none but *craftsmen* ever saw!
Strong mem'ry on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes when far awa'.

May freedom, harmony, and love,
Unite you in the *grand design*,
Beneath th' omniscient eye above,
The glorious *architect* divine!
That you may keep th' *unerring line*,
Still rising by the *plummet's law*,
Till *order* bright completely shine,
Shall be my pray'r when far awa'.

And *you*, farewell! whose merits claim,
Justly that *highest badge* to wear!
Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble name,
To *masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request, permit me here,
When yearly ye assemble a',
One *round*, I ask it with a *tear*,
To him, *the bard that's far awa'!*

SONG.

TUNE.—"Prepare, my dear Brethren, to the Tavern let's fly."

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare,
For a big-bellied bottle's the whole of my care.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you the *crown*, how it waves in the air,
There, a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon proved it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;
But the purse old landlord just waddl'd up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

'Life's cares they are comforts'—a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d'ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And faith I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle's a heaven of care.

[*A Stanza added in a Mason Lodge.*]

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
The honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of the compass and square
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.

WRITTEN IN
FRIARS CARSE HERMITAGE
ON NITH-SIDE.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

As youth and love with sprightly dance,
Beneath thy morning star advance,
Pleasure with her siren air
May delude the thoughtless pair;
Let prudence bless enjoyment's cup,
Then raptur'd sip, and sip it up.

As thy day grows warm and high,
Life's meridian flaming nigh,
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summits wouldst thou scale?
Check thy climbing step, elate,
Evils lurk in felon wait:
Dangers, eagle-pinion'd, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold,
While cheerful peace, with linnet song,
Chants the lowly dells among.

As the shades of ev'ning close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose:
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-neuk of ease.
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;
And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man's true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not, Art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Did many talents gild thy span?
Or frugal nature grudge the one?
Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful Heav'n,
To virtue or to vice is giv'n.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways,
Lead to the wretched, vile, and base.

Thus resign'd and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep;

Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night where dawn shall never break,
Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.
Stranger, go.—Heav'n be thy guide!
Quod the beadsman of Nith-side.

ODE.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. —— OF ——

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation! mark
Who in widow-weeds appears,
Laden with unhonoured years,
Noosing with care a bursting purse,
Baited with many a deadly curse!

STROPHE.

View the wither'd beldam's face—
Can thy keen inspection trace
Aught of humanity's sweet melting grace?
Not that eye, 'tis rheum o'erflows,
Pity's flood there never rose,
See those hands, ne'er stretch'd to save,
Hands that took—but never gave.
Keeper of Mammon's iron chest,
Lo, there she goes, unpitied, and unblest;
She goes, but not to realms of everlasting rest!

ANTISTROPHE.

Plunderer of armies, lift thine eyes,
(A while forbear, ye tort'ring fiends,)
Seest thou whose step unwilling hither bends?
No fallen angel, hurl'd from upper skies;
'Tis thy trusty *quondam mate*,
Doom'd to share thy fiery fate,
She, tardy hell-ward plies.

EPODE.

And are they of no more avail,
Ten thousand glitt'ring pounds a year?
In other worlds can Mammon fail,
Omnipotent as he is here?
O, bitter mock'ry of the *pompous bier*,
While down the wretched *vital part* is driv'n!
The cave-lodg'd beggar, with a conscience clear,
Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heav'n.

ELEGY

ON

CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON.

But now his radiant course is run,
For Matthew's course was bright:
His soul was like the glorious sun,
A matchless Heav'nly light!

O DEATH! thou tyrant fell and bloody;
The meikle devil wi' a woodie
Haurl thee hame to his black smiddie,
O'er hurcheon hides,
And like stock-fish come o'er his studdie
Wi' thy auld sides!

He's gane, he's gane! he's frae us torn,
The ae best fellow e'er was born!
Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel shall mourn
By wood and wild,
Where haply, Pity strays forlorn,
Frae man exil'd.

Ye hills, near neebors o' the starns,
That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns,
Where echo slumbers
Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
My wailing numbers!

Mourn ilka grove the cushat kens!
Ye haz'lly shaws and briery dens!
Ye burnies wimplin down your glens,
Wi' toddlin din,
Or foaming, strang, wi' hasty stens,
Frae lin to lin.

Mourn little harebells o'er the lee;
Ye stately fox-gloves fair to see;
Ye woodbines, hanging bonnilie
In scented bow'rs;
Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first o' flow'rs.

At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at his head,
At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,
I' th' rustling gale,
Ye maukins whiddin thro' the glade,
Come join my wail.

Mourn ye wee songsters o' the wood;
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud;
Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;
Ye whistling plover;
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood;
He's gane for ever!

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals;
Ye fisher herons, watching eels;
Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
Circling the lake;
Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,
Rair for his sake.

Mourn, clam'ring craiks at close o' day,
'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay;
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore

Tell thae far warlds, wha lies in clay,
Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r,
In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r,
Sets up her horn,
Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
Till waukrift morn!

O rivers, forests, hills, and plains!
Oft have ye heard my canty strains:
But now what else for me remains
But tales of woe;
An' frae my een the drapping rains
Maun ever flow.

Mourn, spring, thou darling of the year!
Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear:
Thou, simmer, while each corny spear
Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green, flow'ry tresses shear,
For him that's dead!

Thou, autumn, with thy yellow hair,
In grief thy sallow mantle tear!
Thou, winter, hurling thro' the air
The roaring blast,
Wide o'er the naked world declare
The worth we've lost!

Mourn him, thou sun, great source of light!
Mourn, empress of the silent night!
And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
My Matthew mourn!
For through your orbs he's ta'en his flight,
Ne'er to return.

O *Henderson!* the man, the brother!
And art thou gone, and gone for ever!
And hast thou cross'd that unknown river,
Life's dreary bound!
Like thee, where shall I find another;
The world around!

Go to your sculptur'd tombs, ye Great,
In a' the tinsel trash of state!
But by the honest turf I'll wait,
Thou man of worth
And weep the ae best fellow's fate
E'er lay in earth.

THE EPITAPH.

Stop, passenger! my story's brief;
And truth I shall relate, man:
I tell nae common tale o' grief,
For Matthew was a great man.

If thou uncommon merit hast,
Yet spurn'd at fortune's door, man;
A look of pity hither cast,
For Matthew was a poor man.

If thou a noble soldier art,
That passest by his grave, man:
There moulders here a gallant heart,
For Matthew was a brave man.

If thou on men, their works and ways,
Canst throw uncommon light, man;
Here lies wha weel had won thy praise,
For Matthew was a bright man.

If thou at friendship's sacred ca',
Wad life itself resign, man;
Thy sympathetic tear maun fa'
For Matthew was a kind man.

If thou art staunch without a stain,
Like the unchanging blue, man,
This was a kinsman o' thy ain,
For Matthew was a true man.

If thou hast wit, and fun, and fire,
And ne'er guid wine did fear, man,
This was thy billie, dam, and sire,
For Matthew was a queer man,

If ony waggish whingin sot,
To blame poor Matthew dare, man;
May dool and sorrow be his lot,
For Matthew was a rare man.

LAMENT ON MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS,

ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out o'er the grassy lea:
Now Phœbus cheers the crystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the weary wight
That fast in durance lies.

Now lav'rocks wake the merry morn,
Aloft on dewy wing;
The merle, in his noontide bow'r
Makes woodland echoes ring;
The mavis mild wi' many a note,
Sings drowsy day to rest:
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:

The meanest hind in fair Scotland,
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang.

I was the Queen o' bonnie France,
Where happy I hae been;
Fu' lightly raise I in the morn,
As blithe lay down at e'en:
And I'm the sovereign of Scotland,
And mony a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands
And never ending care.

But as for thee, thou false woman,
My sister and my fae,
Grim vengeance, yet, shall whet a sword
That thro' thy soul shall gae;
The weeping blood in woman's breast
Was never known to thee;
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
Frae woman's pitying e'e.

My son! my son! may kinder stars
Upon thy fortune shine:
And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
That neer wad blink on mine!
God keep thee frae thy mother's faes,
Or turn their hearts to thee;
And where thou meet's thy mother's friend,
Remember him for me!

O! soon, to me, may summer-suns
Nae mair light up the morn!
Nae mair, to me, the autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death
Let winter round me rave;
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring,
Bloom on my peaceful grave.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq,

OF FINTRA.

Late crippled of an arm and now a leg
About to beg a *pass* for leave to beg;
Dull, listless, teas'd, dejected, and deprest,
(Nature is adverse to a cripple's rest;)
Will generous *Graham* list to his poet's wail?
(It soothes poor misery, hearkening to her tale,)
And hear him curse the light he first survey'd
And doubly curse the luckless rhyming trade?

Thou, Nature, partial Nature, I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
The lion and the bull thy care have found,
One shakes the forest, and one spurns the ground:
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
Th' envenom'd wasp, victorious guards his cell.

Thy minions, kings, defend, control, devour,
In all the omnipotence of rule and power.—
Foxes and statesmen, subtile wiles ensure;
The cit and polecat stink, and are secure;
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedge-hog in their robes are snug,
Ev'n silly woman has her warlike arts,
Her tongue and eyes, her dreaded spear and darts.

But Oh! thou bitter step-mother and hard,
To thy poor, fenceless, naked child—the Bard!
A thing unteachable in world's skill,
And half an idiot too, more helpless still.
No heels to bear him from the opening dun;
No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun;
No horns, but those by luckless Hymen worn,
And those, alas! not Amalthea's horn:
No nerves olfactory, Mammon's trusty cur,
Clad in rich dulness' comfortable fur,
In naked feeling, and in aching pride,
He bears th' unbroken blast from every side:
Vampyre booksellers drain him to the heart,
And scorpion critics cureless venom dart.

Critics—appall'd, I venture on the name,
Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame;
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monroes;
He hacks to teach, they mangle to expose.

His heart by causeless, wanton malice wrung,
By blockheads' daring into madness stung;
His well-won bays, than life itself more dear,
By miscreants torn, who ne'er one sprig must wear;
Foil'd, bleading, tortur'd, in unequal strife,
The hapless poet flounders on through life,
Till fled each hope that once his bosom fired,
And fled each muse that glorious once inspired,
Low sunk in squalid, unprotected age,
Dead even resentment for his injured page,
He heeds or feels no more the ruthless critic's rage.

So, by some hedge, the generous steed deceased,
For half starv'd snarling curs a dainty feast;
By toil and famine wore to skin and bone,
Lies senseless of each tugging bitch's son.

O dulness! portion of the truly blest!
Calm shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
Of fortune's polar frost, or torrid beams.
If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
With sober selfish ease they sip it up;
Conscious the bounteous meed they well deserve,
They only wonder, 'some folks' do not starve.
The grave sage hern thus easy picks his frog,
And thinks the mallard a sad worthless dog.
When disappointment snaps the clue of hope,
And thro' disastrous night they darkling grope,

With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
And just conclude 'that fools are fortune's care.'
So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.

Not so the idle muses' mad-cap train,
Not such the working of their moon struck brain;
In equanimity they never dwell,
By turns in soaring heaven, or vaulted hell.

I dread the fate, relentless and severe,
With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear;
Already one strong hold of hope is lost,
Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust;
(Fled like the sun-eclips'd as noon appears,
And left us darkling in a world of tears:)
O! hear my ardent, grateful selfish pray'r!
Fintra, my other stay, long bless and spare!
Thro' a long life his hopes and wishes crown,
And bright in cloudless skies his un go down!
May *bliss domestic* smooth his private path;
Give energy to life; and sooth his latest breath,
With many a filial tear circling the bed of death!

LAMENT FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

The wind blew hollow frae the hills,
By fits the sun's departing beam
Look'd on the fading yellow woods
That wav'd o'er Lugar's winding stream:
Beneath a craigy steep, a bard,
Laden with years and meikle pain,
In loud lament bewail'd his lord,
Whom death had all untimely ta'en.

He lean'd him to an ancient aik,
Whose trunk was mould'ring down with years;
His locks were bleached white wi' time,
His hoary cheek was wet wi' tears!
And as he touch'd his trembling harp,
And as he tun'd his doleful sang,
The winds, lamenting thro' their caves,
To echo bore their notes alang,

"Ye scatter'd birds, that faintly sing,
The relics of the vernal quire!
Ye woods that shed on a' the winds
The honours of the aged year!
A few short months, and glad and gay,
Again ye'll charm the ear and e'e;
But nocht in all revolving time
Can gladness bring again to me.

"I am a bending aged tree,
That long has stood the wind and rain;
But now has come a cruel blast,
And my last hald of earth is gane;

Nae leaf o' mine shall greet the spring,
Nae simmer sun exalt my bloom;
But I maun lie before the storm,
And ithers plant them in my room.

"I've see sae mony changefu' years,
On earth I am a stranger grown;
I wander in the ways of men,
Alike unknowing and unknown,
Unheard, unpitied, unreliev'd,
I bear alane my lade o' care,
For silent, low, on beds of dust,
Lie a' that would my sorrow share.

And last, (the sum of a' my griefs!)
My noble master lies in clay;
The flower amang our barons bold,
His country's pride, his country's stay:
In weary being now I pine,
For a' the life of life is dead,
And hope has left my aged ken,
On forward wing for ever fled.

"Awake thy last sad voice, my harp!
The voice of woe and wild despair;
Awake, resound thy latest lay,
Then sleep in silence evermair!
And thou, my last, best, only friend,
That fillest an untimely tomb,
Accept this tribute from the bard
Thou brought from fortune's mirkest gloom.

"In poverty's low, barren vale,
Thick mists, obscure, involv'd me round:
Tho' oft I turn'd the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found:
Thou found'st me like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air,
The friendless bard and rustic song,
Became alike thy fostering care.

"O! why has worth so short a date?
While villains ripen gray with time!
Must thou, the noble, generous, great,
Fall in bold manhood's hardy prime!
Why did I live to see that day!
A day to me so full of woe!
O! had I seen the mortal shaft
Which laid my benefactor low!

"The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!"

LINES,

SENT TO SIR JOHN WHITEFORD, OF WHITEFORD, BART, WITH THE FOREGOING POEM.

THOU, who thy honour as thy God rever'st,
Who, save thy *mind's reproach*, nought earthly fear'st,
To thee this votive offering I impart,
"The tearful tribute of a broken heart."
The *friend* thou valued'st, I the *patron* lov'd;
His worth, his honour, all the world approv'd.
We'll mourn till we too go as he is gone,
And tread the dreary path to that dark world unknown.

TAM O' SHANTER:

A TALE.

"Of Brownies and of Bogilis full is this Buke."—GAWIN DOUGLAS.

WHEN chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' gettin' fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest *Tam o' Shanter*,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O *Tam!* hads't thou but been sae wise,
As ta'en thy ain wife *Kate's* advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November till October,
Ae market day thou was na sober:
That ilka melder wi' the miller.
Thou sat as long as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesy'd that late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in *Doon;*
Or catch'd wi warlocks in the mirk,
By *Alloway's* auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely:
And at his elbow, souter *Johnny*,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter;
And aye the ale was growing better;
The landlady and *Tam* grew gracious,
Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious;
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himself amang the nappy:
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but *Tam* was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed!
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever:
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place:
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time or tide:
The hour approaches *Tam* maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in,
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattlin' showers rose on the blast:
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd:
That night a child might understand,
The deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare *Meg*—
A better never lifted leg—
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry—

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken *Charlie* brak 's neck bane,
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn:
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare *Mungo's* mither hanged hersel.
Before him *Doon* pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars through the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk Alloway seem'd in a bleeze:
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing—

Inspiring bold *John Barleycorn*,
What dangers thou canst make us scorn:
Wi' tippenny we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil.—
The swats sae ream'd in *Tammie's* noddle,
Fair play, he cared nae deils a boddle.
But *Maggie* stood right sair astonish'd,
Till by the heeland hand admonish'd,
She ventured forward on the light;
And vow! *Tam* saw an unco sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance,
Nae cotillon brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock bunker in the east;
There sat auld Nick in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd his pipes, and gart them skirl,
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That show'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip slight,
Each in his cauld hand held a light,
By which heroic *Tam* was able
To note upon the holy table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span lang, wee unchristen'd bairns;
A thief new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp, his gab did gape:
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The gray hairs yet stuck to the heft;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As *Tammie* glowr'd, amaz'd and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now *Tam, O Tam!* had they been queens
A' plump an strapping, in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o'creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies!
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Lowping and flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But *Tam* kenn'd what was what fu' brawlie,
There was ae winsome wench and walie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kenn'd on *Carrick* shore!
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country side in fear,)
Her cutty sark o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude though sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie,—
Ah! little kenn'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she cooft for her wee *Nannie*,
Wi' twa pund Scots, ('twas a' her riches,)
Wad ever graced a dance of witches!

But here my muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r:
To sing how *Nannie* lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was and strang,)
And how *Tam* stood, like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd:
Ev'n Satan glowr'd and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty sark!"
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he *Maggie* rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;

As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;
So *Maggie* runs, the witches follow,
Wi' monie an eldritch screech and hollow.

Ah, *Tam*, Ah, *Tam*, thoul't get thy fairin,
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy *Kate* awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, *Meg*,
And win the key-stane* of the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake!
For *Nannie*, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble *Maggie* prest,
And flew at *Tam* wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she *Maggie's* mettle—
Ae spring brought aff her master hale,
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor *Maggie* scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,
Think ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember *Tam o' Shanter's* mare.

ON SEEING A WOUNDED HARE LIMP BY ME,

WHICH A FELLOW HAD JUST SHOT AT.

INHUMAN man, curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains;
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains,
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith, I musing wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

* It is a well known fact, that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream.—It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with bogles, whatever danger there may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back.

ADDRESS TO THE SHADE OF THOMSON,

ON CROWNING HIS BUST AT EDNAM, ROXBURGHSHIRE, WITH BAYS.

While Virgin Spring, by Eden's flood,
Unfolds her tender mantle green,
Or pranks the sod in frolic mood,
Or tunes Eolian strains between:

While Summer, with a matron grace,
Retreats to Dryburgh's cooling shade,
Yet oft, delighted, stops to trace
The progress of the spiky blade:

While Autumn, benefactor kind,
By Tweed erects his aged head,
And sees, with self-approving mind,
Each creature on his bounty fed:

While maniac Winter rages o'er
The hills where classic Yarrow flows,
Rousing the turbid torrent's roar,
Or sweeping wild, a waste of snows:

So long, sweet Poet of the year,
Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won:
While Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that THOMSON was her son.

EPITAPHS.

ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER.

HERE souter John in death does sleep;
To hell, if he's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep,
He'll haud it weel thegither.

ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

BELOW thir stanes lie Jamie's banes:
O Death, it's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'rin bitch
Into thy dark dominion!

ON WEE JOHNNY.

Hic jacet WEE Johnny.

WHOE'ER thou art, O reader, know,
That death has murder'd Johnny,
An' here his *body* lies fu' low—
For *saul* he ne'er had ony.

FOR THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father and the gen'rous friend.

The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
"For ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

FOR R. A., Esq.

Know thou, O stranger to the fame
Of this much lov'd, much honour'd name!
(For none that knew him need be told)
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

FOR G. H. Esq.

The poor man weeps—here *G*———*n* sleeps,
Wham canting wretches blam'd:
But with *such as he*, where'er he be,
May I be *saved* or *d*———*d*.

A BARD'S EFITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below,
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame,
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkly grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit:
Know, prudent, cautious, *self-control*,
Is wisdom's root.

ON THE LATE CAPTAIN GROSE'S PEREGRINATIONS THROUGH SCOTLAND, COLLECTING THE ANTIQUITIES OF THAT KINGDOM.

Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots,
Frae Maidenkirk to Johnny Groat's;
If there's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede you tent it:
A chield's amang you, taking notes,
And, faith, he'll prent it.

If in your bounds ye chance to light
Upon a fine, fat fodgel wight,
O' stature short, but genius bright,
That's he, mark weel—
And vow! he has an unco slight
O' cauk and keel.

By some auld, houlet-haunted biggin,*
Or kirk, deserted by its riggin,
It's ten to ane ye'll find him snug in
Some eldritch part,
Wi' deils, they say, L—d safe's! colleaguin'
At some black art.

Ilk ghaist that haunts auld ha' or chamer,
Ye gipsy gang that deal in glamor,
And you deep-read in hell's black grammar,
Warlocks and witches;
Ye'll quake at his conjuring hammer,
Ye midnight bitches.

It's tauld he was a sodger bred,
And ane wad rather fa'n than fled:
But now he's quat the sportle blade,
And dog-skin wallet,
And ta'en the—*Antiquarian trade.*
I think they call it.

He has a fouth o' auld nick-nackets:
Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets,†
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets,
A towmont guid:
And parritch pats, and auld saut-backets,
Before the Flood.

Of Eve's first fire he has a cinder;
Auld Tubal Cain's fire-shool and fender:
That which distinguished the gender
O' Balaam's ass;
A broom-stick o' the witch of Endor,
Weel shod wi' brass.

Forbye he'll shape you aff, fu' gleg,
The cut of Adam's philibeg:
The knife that nicket Abel's craig.
He'll prove you fully,
It was a faulding jocteleg,
Or lang kail gullie.—

* Vide his Antiquities of Scotland.
† Vide his treatise on Ancient Armour and Weapons.

But wad ye see him in his glee,
For meikle glee and fun has he,
Then sit him down, and twa or three
Guid fellows wi' him,
And *port, O port!* shine thou a wee,
And then ye'll see him!

Now, by the pow'rs o' verse and prose:
Thou art a dainty chiel, O Grose!—
Whae'er o' thee shall ill suppose,
They sair misca' thee;
I'd take the rascal by the nose,
Wad say, Shame fa' thee!

TO MISS CRUIKSHANKS,

A VERY YOUNG LADY, WRITTEN ON THE BLANK LEAF OF A BOOK, PRESENTED TO HER BY THE AUTHOR.

Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming on thy early May,
Never may'st thou, lovely flow'r,
Chilly shrink in sleety show'r!
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' pois'nous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights,
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor ever Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

May'st thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem;
Till some ev'ning, sober, calm,
Dropping dews, and breathing balm,
While all around the woodland rings,
And ev'ry bird thy requiem sings;
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honours round,
And resign to parent earth
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth.

SONG.

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,
And waste my soul with care!
But ah! how bootless to admire,
When fated to despair!

Yet in thy presence, lovely Fair,
To hope may be forgiv'n;
For sure 'twere impious to despair,
So much in sight of Heav'n.

ON READING, IN A NEWSPAPER,

THE DEATH OF JOHN M'LEOD, Esq.

Sad thy tale thou idle page,
And rueful thy alarms:

Death tears the brother of her love
From Isabella's arms.
Sweetly deck'd with pearl dew,
The morning rose may blow;
But cold successive noontide blasts
May lay its beauties low.
Fair on Isabella's morn
The sun propitious smil'd;
But long ere noon, succeding clouds
Succeeding hopes beguil'd.
Fate oft tears the bosom chords
That nature finest strung;
So Isabella's heart was form'd,
And so that heart was wrung.
Dread Omnipotence, alone,
Can heal the wound he gave;
Can point the brimful grief-worn eyes
To scenes beyond the grave.
Virtuous blossoms there shall blow,
And fear no withering blast;
There Isabella's spotless worth
Shall happy be at last.

HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER.

TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My Lord, I know your noble ear
Woe ne'er assails in vain;
Embolden'd thus, I beg you'll hear
Your humble slave complain,
How saucy Phœbus, scorching beams,
In flaming summer pride,
Dry-withering, waste my foaming streams,
And drink my crystal tide.
The lightly jumping glowrin trouts,
That thro' my waters play,
If, in their random, wanton spouts,
They near the margin stray;
If hapless chance! they linger lang,
I'm scorching up so shallow,
They're left the whitening stanes amang,
In gasping death to Wallow.
Last day I grat, wi' spite and teen,
As poet B—— came by,
That, to a bard I should be seen,
Wi' half my channel dry;
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,
Even as I was he shor'd me:
But had I in my glory been,
He, kneeling, wad ador'd me.
Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,
In twisting strength I rin;

There, high my boiling torrent smokes,
Wild roaring o'er a linn:
Enjoying large each spring and well
As nature gave them me,
I am, although I say't mysel,
Worth gaun a mile to see.

Would then my noble master please
To grant my highest wishes,
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees,
And bonnie spreading bushes;
Delighted doubly then, my Lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock warbling wild,
Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, music's gayest child,
Shall sweetly join the choir:
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear,
The mavis wild and mellow;
The robin pensive autumn cheer,
In all her locks of yellow;

This too, a covert shall insure,
To shield them from the storm;
And coward maukin sleep secure,
Low in her grassy form;
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,
To weave his crown of flowers;
Or find a shelt'ring safe retreat,
From prone descending showers.

And here, by sweet endearing stealth,
Shall meet the loving pair,
Despising worlds with all their wealth
As empty idle care:
The flow'rs shall vie in all their charms
The hour of heaven to grace,
And birks extend their fragrant arms
To screen the dear embrace.

Here, haply too, at vernal dawn,
Some musing bard may stray,
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,
And misty mountain, grey;
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild chequering thro' the trees,
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,
Hoarse swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
Their shadows' watery bed!
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest,
My craggy cliffs adorn;

And, for the little songster's nest,
The close embow'ring thorn.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,
Your little angel band
Spring, like their fathers, up to prop
Their honour'd native land!
So may, thro' Albion's farthest ken,
To social flowing glasses,
The grace be—"Athole's honest men,
And Athole's bonnie lassies!"

ON SCARING SOME WATER-FOWL, IN LOCH-TURIT;

A WILD SCENE AMONG THE HILLS OF OCHTERTYRE.

Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your watery haunt forsake,
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy food, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace,
Man, your proud, usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below;
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.

The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels.
But man, to whom alone is giv'n
A ray direct from pitying heav'n,
Glorious in his heart humane—
And creatures for his pleasure slain.

In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wand'ring swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays;
Far from human haunts and ways;
All on nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might,
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his pow'rs you scorn:
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;

And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL

OVER THE CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE PARLOUR OF THE INN AT KENMORE, TAYMOUTH.

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
Th' abodes of covey'd grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
Till fam'd Breadalbane open to my view,
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild, scatter'd, clothe their ample sides,
Ah' outstretching lake, embosom'd 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
The Tay meand'ring sweet in infant pride,
The palace rising on his verdant sides,
The lawns wood-fringed in Nature's native taste;
The hillocks dropt in Nature's careless haste!
The arches striding o'er the new-born stream;
The village, glittering in the moontide beam—
. . . . . .
Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,
Lone wandering by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
The incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—
. . . . . .
Here Poesy might wake her heav'n taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here, to the wrongs of fate half reconcil'd,
Misfortune's lighten'd steps might wander wild:
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck Grief might heaven-ward stretch her scan,
And injur'd Worth forget and pardon man.

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL,

STANDING BY THE FALL OF FYERS, NEAR LOCH-NESS.

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods
The roaring Fyers pours his mossy floods:
Till full he dashes on the rocky mounds,
Where, thro' a shapeless breach, his stream resounds.

As high in air, the bursting torrents flow,
As deep recoiling surges foam below,
Prone down the rock the whitening shoot descends,
And viewless echo's ear, astonish'd, rends,
Dim-seen, through mists, and ceaseless showers,
The hoary cavern, wide-surrounding lowers.
Still thro' the gap the struggling river toils,
And still below, the horrid caldron boils—

ON THE BIRTH OF A
POSTHUMOUS CHILD,
BORN IN PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF FAMILY DISTRESS.

Sweet Flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love,
And ward o' mony a prayer,
What heart o' stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair!

November hirples o'er the lea,
Chill on thy lovely form;
And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree,
Should shield thee frae the storm.

May He who gives the rain to pour,
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee frae the driving shower,
The bitter frost and snaw!

May He, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds,
Protect and guard the mother plant,
And heal her cruel wounds!

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer morn;
Now feebly bends she in the blast,
Unshelter'd and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand!
And from thee many a parent stem
Arise to deck our land!

THE WHISTLE:
A BALLAD.

As the authentic prose history of the Whistle is curious, I shall here give it.—In the train of Anne of Denmark, when she came to Scotland, with our James the Sixth, there came over also a Danish gentleman of gigantic stature and of great prowess, and a matchless champion of Bacchus. He had a little ebony Whistle which, at the commencement of the orgies, he laid on the table, and whoever was last able to blow it, everybody else being disabled by the potency of the bottle, was to carry off the Whistle as a trophy of victory. The Dane produced credentials of his victories, without a single defeat, at the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, Warsaw, and several of the petty courts of Germany: and challenged the Scots Bacchanalians to the alternative of trying his prowess, or else of acknowledging their inferiority. After many overthrows on the part of the Scots, the Dane was encountered by Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, ancestor to the present worthy baronet of that name; who, after three days and three nights hard contest, left the Scandinavian under the table,

And blew on the Whistle his requiem shrill.

Sir Walter, son to Sir Robert before mentioned, afterwards lost the Whistle to Sir Riddel of Glenriddel, who had married a sister of Sir Walter's.—On Friday, the 16th of October, 1760, at Friars Carse, the Whistle was once more contended for, as related in the ballad, by the present Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton; Robert Riddel, Esq. of Glenriddel, lineal descendant and representative of Walter Riddel, who won the Whistle, and in whose family it had continued; and Alexander Ferguson, Esq. of Craigdarroch, likewise descended of the great Sir Robert; which last gentleman carried off the hard won honours of the field.

I sing of a Whistle, a Whistle of worth,
I sing of a Whistle, the pride of the North,
Was brought to the court of our good Scottish king,
And long with this Whistle all Scotland shall ring.

Old Loda*, still rueing the arm of Fingal,
The god of the bottle sends down from his hall—
"This Whistle's your challenge, to Scotland get o'er,
And drink them to hell, Sir! or ne'er see me more!"

Old poets have sung, and old chronicles tell,
What champions ventur'd, and what champions fell;
The son of great Loda was conqueror still,
And blew on the Whistle his requiem shrill.

Till Robert, the lord of the Cairn and the Scaur,
Unmatch'd at the bottle, unconquer'd in war,
He drank his poor god-ship as deep as the sea,
No tide of the Baltic e'er drunker than he.

Thus Robert, victorious, the trophy has gain'd;
Which now in his house has for ages remain'd;
Till three noble chieftains, and all of his blood,
The jovial contest again have renew'd.

Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw;
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skill'd in old coins;
And gallant Sir Robert, deep read in old wines.

Craigdarroch began, with a tongue smooth as oil,
Desiring Glenriddel to yield up the spoil;
Or else he would muster the heads of the clan,
And once more, in claret, try which was the man.

"By the gods of the ancients," Glenriddel replies,
"Before I surrender so glorious a prize,
I'll conjure the ghost of the great Rorie More,
And bumper his horn with him twenty times o'er."

Sir Robert, a soldier, no speech would pretend,
But he ne'er turn'd his back on his foe—or his friend,
Said, Toss down the Whistle, the prize of the field,
And knee-deep in claret, he'd die or he'd yield.

To the board of Glenriddel our heroes repair,
So noted for drowning of sorrow and care;
But for wine and for welcome not more known to fame,
Than the sense, wit, and taste, of a sweet lovely dame.

A bard was selected to witness the fray;
And tell future ages the feats of the day;
A bard who detested all sadness and spleen,
And wish'd that Parnassus a vineyard had been.

The dinner being over, the claret they ply,
And ev'ry new cork is a new spring of joy;
In the bands of old friendship and kindred so set,
And the bands grew the tighter the more they were wet.

Gay pleasure ran riot as bumpers ran o'er;
Bright Phœbus ne'er witness'd so joyous a core,
And vowed that to leave them he was quite forlorn,
Till Cynthia hinted he'd see them next morn.

*See Ossian's Caric-thura.

Six bottles a piece had well wore out the night,
When gallant Sir Robert, to finish the fight,
Turn'd o'er in one bumper a bottle of red,
And swore 'twas the way that their ancestors did.

Then worthy Glenriddel, so cautious and sage,
No longer the warfare, ungodly, would wage;
A high-ruling Elder to wallow in wine!
He left the foul business to folks less divine.

The gallant Sir Robert fought hard to the end;
But who can with fate and quart bumpers contend?
Though fate said—a hero should perish in light;
So uprose bright Phœbus—and down fell the knight.

Next uprose our bard, like a prophet in drink;—
"Craigdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink;
But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

"Thy line, that have struggled for Freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce;
So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day!"

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

AULD NEEBOR,

I'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld farrent, frien'ly letter;
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak so fair:
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter,
Some less maun sair.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbuck jint and diddle,
Tae cheer you through the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares,
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
Your auld grey hairs.

But Davie, lad, I'll red ye'er glaikit;
I'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit;
An' gif it's sae, ye sud be lickit
Until ye fyke;
Sic hans as you sud ne'er be faikit,
Be hain't wha like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus brink,
Rivin' the words tae gar them clink;
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't we' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
An' whyles, but aye owre late, I think,
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,

The devil-haet, that I sud ban,
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme of livin';
Nae cares to give us joy or grievin':
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
An' while ought's there,
Then, hiltie, skiltie, we gae scrievin',
An' fash nae mair.

Leeze me on rhyme! its aye a treasure,
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel', at wark or leisure,
The Muse, poor hizzie!
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,
She's seldom lazy.

Haud tae the Muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you mony a shavie;
But for the Muse, she'll ne'er leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae poor,
Na, even tho' limpin' wi' the spavie
Frae door tae door.

ON MY EARLY DAYS.

I MIND, it weel in early date,
When I was beardless, young, and blate,
An' first could thresh the barn;
Or haud a yokin o' the pleugh;
An' tho' forfoughten sair enough,
Yet unco proud to learn;
When first amang the yellow corn
A man I reckon'd was,
And wi' the lave ilk merry morn
Could rank my rig and lass,
Still shearing, and clearing
The tither stooked raw,
Wi' claivers, an' haivers,
Wearing the day awa.

E'en then a wish, I mind its pow'r,
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake
Some usefu' plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd the weeder-clips aside,
An' spared the symbol dear:
No nation, no station,
My envy e'er could raise,
A Scot still, but blot still,
I knew nae higher praise.

But still the elements o' sang
In formless jumble, right an' rang,
Wild floated in my brain:
'Till on that har'st I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
She rous'd the forming strain:
I see her yet, the sonsie quean,
That lighted up her jingle,
Her witching smile, her pauky e'en
That gart my heart-strings tingle:
I fired, inspired,
At every kindling keek,
But bashing, and dashing,
I feared aye to speak.

. . . . . .

SONG.

TUNE—"Bonnie Dundee."

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young Belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a',
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In Lon'on or Paris they'd gotten it a'
Miss Miller is fine, *Miss Markland's* divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and *Miss Betty* is braw:
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' *Miss Morton*,
But *Armour's** the jewel for me o' them a'

ON THE DEATH OF SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR.

The lamp of day, with ill-presaging glare,
Dim, cloudy, sunk beneath the western wave;
Th' inconstant blast howl'd thro' the darkening air,
And hollow whistled in the rocky cave.

Lone as I wander'd by each cliff and dell,
Once the loved haunts of Scotia's royal train;
Or mused where limpid streams once hallow'd, well,
Or mould'ring ruins mark the sacred fane.

Th' increasing blast roar'd round the beetling rocks,
The clouds, swift-wing'd, flew o'er the starry sky,
The groaning trees untimely shed their locks,
And shooting meteors caught the startled eye.

The paly moon rose in the livid east,
And 'mong the cliffs disclosed a stately form,
In weeds of woe that frantic beat her breast,
And mix'd her wailings with the raving storm.

Wild to my heart the filial pulses glow,
'Twas Caledonia's trophied shield I view'd;
Her form majestic droop'd in pensive woe,
The lightning of her eye in tears imbued.

* This is one of our Bard's early productions. Armour is now Mrs. Burns.

Reversed that spear, redoubtable in war,
Reclined that banner, erst in fields unfurl'd,
That like a deathful meteor gleam'd afar,
And braved the mighty monarchs of the world.—

"My patriot son fills an untimely grave!"
With accents wild and lifted arms she cried;
"Low lies the hand that oft was stretch'd to save,
Low lies the heart that swell'd with honest pride!

"A weeping country joins a widow's tear,
The helpless poor mix with the orphan's cry;
The drooping arts around their patron's bier,
And grateful science heaves the heartfelt sigh.

"I saw my sons resume their ancient fire;
I saw fair Freedom's blossoms richly blow!
But, ah! how hope is born but to expire!
Relentless fate has laid the guardian low.—

"My patriot falls, but shall he lie unsung,
While empty greatness saves a worthless name!
No; every Muse shall join her tuneful tongue,
And future ages hear his growing fame.

"And I will join a mother's tender cares,
Thro' future times to make his virtues last,
That distant years may boast of other Blairs"—
She said, and vanish'd with the sweeping blast.

WRITTEN

ON THE BLANK LEAF OF A COPY OF THE POEMS, PRESENTED TO AN OLD SWEETHEART, THEN MARRIED.

Once fondly lov'd, and still remember'd dear,
Sweet early object of my youthful vows,
Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere,
Friendship! 'tis all cold duty now allows.—

And when you read the simple artless rhymes,
One friendly sigh for him, he asks no more,
Who distant burns in flaming torrid climes,
Or haply lies beneath th' Atlantic roar.

THE JOLLY BEGGARS.

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,
Or wavering like the Bauckie-bird,
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte,
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch drest;
Ae night at e'en a merry core,
O' randie, gangrel bodies,
In Poosie-Nansie's held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies:

Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—
She blinket on her sodger:
An' aye he gies the tousie drab
The tither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an a'mous dish.
Ilk smack did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whip,
Then staggering and swaggering
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

TUNE—"Soldier's Joy."

I AM a son of Mars who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram;
I served out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,
I'd clatter my stumps at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now tho' I must beg with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet,
As when I us'd in scarlet to follow a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What tho' with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks often times for a home,
When the tother bag I sell, and the tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of hell, at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk,
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattans backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore;
A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
He skirl'd out encore!

But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

TUNE.—"Soldier Laddie."

I ONCE was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men;
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church,
He ventur'd the *soul*, and I risked the *body*,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at Cunningham fair;
His *rags regimental* they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup or a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin,
Wha kent sae weel to cleek the sterling,
For monie a pursie she had hooked,
And had in mony a well been ducked.
Her dove had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie!
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

AIR.

TUNE.—"O an ye were dead Gudeman."

A HIGHLAND lad my love was born,
The Lalland laws he held in scorn;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS.

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman!
Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman!
There's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
An' gude claymore down by his side,
The ladies hearts he did trepan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords and ladies gay;
For a Lalland face he feared none,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

But, oh! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast:
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper, wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trysts and fairs to driddle,
Her strappan limb and gausy middle
He reach'd nae higher,
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on haunch, an' upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an Arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' *Allegretto* glee
His giga solo.

AIR.

TUNE.—"Whistle owre the lave o't."

LET me ryke up to dight that tear,
An' go wi' me to be my dear,
An' then your every care and fear
May whistle owre the lave o't.

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
An' a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns and weddings we'se be there,
An' O! sae nicely's we will fare;
We'll bouse about till Daddie Care
Sings whistle o'er the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily the banes we'll pyke,
An' sun oursels about the dyke,
An' at our leisure, when we like,
We'll whistle o'er the lave o't
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heaven o' charms,
And while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sick harms,
May whistle o'er the lave o't.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy Caird,
As weel as poor Gutscraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a rusty rapier—
He swoor by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,
Unless he would from that time forth,
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
And pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
And sae the quarrel ended.
But though his little heart did grieve,
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,
When thus the caird address'd her.

AIR.

TUNE.—"Clout the Cauldron."

My bonnie lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station;
I've travell'd round all Christian ground
In this my occupation.
I've ta'en the gold, I've been enroll'd
In many a noble squadron:
But vain they search'd, when off I march'd
To go and clout the cauldron.
I've ta'en the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
Wi' a' his noise an' caprin',

An' tak' a share wi' those that bear
The *budget* an' the *apron*.
An' *by* that stowp, my faith and houp,
An' *by* that dear Keilbagie,
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie.
An' by that stowp, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevail'd—the unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
An' partly she was drunk.
Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man of spunk,
Wish'd *unison* between the pair,
An' made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft
That play'd a dame a shavie,
The fiddler rak'd her fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie.
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,
Tho' limping with the spavie,
He hirpl'd up, and lap like daft,
An' shor'd them Daintie Davie
O boot that nigh.

He was a care-defying blade
As ever Bacchus listed,
Though Fortune sair upon him laid,
His heart she ever miss'd it.
He had no wish but—to be glad,
Nor want but—when he thirsted;
He hated nought but—to be sad,
And thus the Muse suggested,
His sang that night.

AIR.

TUNE—"For a' that, an' a' that,"

I AM a bard of no regard,
Wi' gentle folks, an' a' that;
But *Homer-like*, the glowran byke,
Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, an' a' that;
An' twice as meikle's a' that;
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
I've wife enough for a' that.

I never drank the Muse's stank,
Castalia's burn, an' a' that;
But there it streams, and richly reams,
My *Helicon* I ca' that.
For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
Their humble slave, an' a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A moral sin to thraw that.
For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love an' a' that;
But for how lang the *flie may stang*,
Let *inclination* law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks and craft have put me daft,
They've ta'en me in an' a' that:
But clear your decks, and here's the *sex!*
I like the jads for a' that.

"For a' that, an' a' that,
An' twice as meikle's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They're welcome till't for a' that.

RECITATIVO.

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
Re-echo'd from each mouth;
They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowan drouth.

Then owre again, the jovial thrang,
The poet did request,
To loose his pack an' wale a sang,
A ballad o' the best:
He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa *Deborahs*,
Looks round him, an' found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.

TUNE—"Jolly Mortals fill your Glasses."

SEE! the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing.

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter *how* or *where!*
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended *carriage*
Through the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig, &c.

Life is all a *variorum*,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about *decorum*
Who have characters to lose.
A fig, &c.

Here's to the budgets, bags, and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged *brats and callets!*
One and all cry out, Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

THE KIRK'S ALARM.

A SATIRE.

ORTHODOX, orthodox, wha believe in John Knox,
Let me sound an alarm to your conscience;
There's a heretic blast has been blawn in the wast,
That what is no sense must be nonsense.

Dr. Mac, Dr. Mac, you should stretch on a rack,
To strike evil doers wi' terror;
To join faith and sense upon ony pretence,
Is heretic, damnable error.

Town of Ayr, town of Ayr, it was mad, I declare,
To meddle wi' mischief a brewing;
Provost John is still deaf to the church's relief,
And orator Bob is its ruin.

D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild, tho' your heart's like a child,
And your life like the new driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

Rumble John, Rumble John, mount the steps wi' a groan,
Cry the book is wi' heresy cramm'd;
Then lug out your ladle, deal brimstone like adle,
And roar everyn ote of the damn'd.

Simper James, Simper James, leave the fair Killiedames,
There's a holier chace in your view;
I'll lay on your head, that the pack ye'll soon lead,
For puppies like you there's but few.

Singet Sawney, Singet Sawney, are ye herding the penny,
Unconscious what evils await;
Wi' a jump, yell, and howl, alarm every soul,
For the foul thief is just at your gate.

Daddy Auld, Daddy Auld, there's a tod in the fauld,
A tod meikle waur than the clerk;
Tho' ye can do little skaith, ye'll be in at the death,
And if ye canna bite ye may bark.

Davie Bluster, Davie Bluster, if for a saint ye do muster,
The corps is no nice of recruits:
Yet to worth let's be just, royal blood ye might boast,
If the ass was the king of the brutes.

Jamie Goose, Jamie Goose, ye ha'e made but toom roose,
In hunting the wicked lieutenant;
But the Doctor's your mark, for the L—d's haly ark;
He has cooper'd and cawd a wrang pin in't,

Poet Willie, Poet Willie, gie the Doctor a volley,
Wi' your liberty's chain and your wit;
O'er Pegasus' side ye ne'er laid a stride,
Ye but smelt, man, the place where he sh-t.

Andro Gouk, Andro Gouk, ye may slander the book,
And the book not the waur let me tell ye;
Ye are rich, and look big, but lay by hat and wig,
And ye'll ha'e a calf's head o' sma' value.

Barr Steenie, Barr Steenie, what mean ye? what mean ye?
If ye'll meddle nae mair wi' the matter,
Ye may ha'e some pretence to havins and sense,
Wi' people wha ken ye nae better.

Irvine side, Irvine side, wi' your turkey-cock pride,
Of manhood but sma' is your share;
Ye've the figure, 'tis true, even your faes will allow,
And your friends they dare grant you nae mair.

Muirland Jock, Muirland Jock, when the L—d makes a rock,
To crush Common Sense for her sins,
If ill manners were wit, there's no mortal so fit,
To confound the poor Doctor at ance.

Holy Will, Holy Will, there was wit in your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms o' the poor;
The timmer is scant, when ye're ta'en for a saint,
Wha should swing in a rape for an hour.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons, seize your sp'ritual guns,
Ammunition ye can never need;
Your hearts are the stuff, will be powther enough,
And your skulls are storehouses o' lead.

Poet Burns, Poet Burns, wi' your priest-skelping turns,
Why desert ye your auld native shire;
Your muse is a gipsie, e'en tho' she were tipsie,
She could ca' us na waur than we are.

THE TWA HERDS.

O A' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pasture's orthodox,

Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes,
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks,
About the dykes?

The twa best herds in a' the west,
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast,
These five and twenty simmers past,
O! dool to tell,
Ha'e had a bitter black out-cast,
Atween themsel.

O, M——y, man, and worthy R——ll,
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how new-light herds will whistle,
And think it fine!
The Lord's cause ne'er gat sic a twistle,
Sin' I ha'e min'.

O, Sirs, whae'er wad hae expeckit,
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er by laird respeckit,
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' M——y's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank,
Nae poison'd soor Arminian stank,
He let them taste,
Frae Calvin's well, aye clear they drank,
O sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock and tod,
Weel kend his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road,
Baith out and in,
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like R——ll, tell'd his tale,
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,
He kend the Lord's sheep, ilka tail,
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the gospel club,
And new-light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin,
Could shake them o'er the burning dub:
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagreet,
An' names, like villain, hypocrite,
Ilk ither gi'en,
While new-light herds wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's liein'!

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld,
There's D——n, deep, and P——s, shaul,
But chiefly thou, apostle A—d
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, hot and cauld,
Till they agree.

Consider, Sirs, how we're beset,
There's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that cursen set,
I winna name,
I hope frae heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

D——e has been lang our fae,
M'——ll has wraught us meikle wae,
And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'——e,
And baith the S——s,
That aft ha'e made us black and blae,
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld W—w lang has hatch'd mischief,
We thought aye death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chield wha'll soundly buff our beef;
I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel,
There S—h for ane,
I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,
And that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come join your counsel and your skills,
To cow the lairds,
And get the brutes the power themsels,
To chose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And learning in a woody dance,
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,
That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,
M'——ll's close nervous excellence,
M'Q—e's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'——h,
Wi' S—th, wha thro' the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

THE HENPECK'D HUSBAND.

Curs'd be the man, the poorest wretch in life,
The crouching vassal to the tyrant wife,

Who has no will but by her high permission;
Who has not sixpence but in her possession;
Who must to her his dear friend's secret tell;
Who dreads a curtain lecture worse than hell.
Were such the wife had fallen to my part,
I'd break her spirit, or I'd break her heart;
I'd charm her with the magic of a switch,
I'd kiss her maids, and kick the perverse b—h.

ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.

For lords or kings I dinna mourn,
E'en let them die—for that they're born!
But, oh, prodigious to reflect,
A *Towmont*, Sirs, is gane to wreck!
O *Eighty-eight*, in thy sma' space
What dire events ha'e taken place!
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire's tint ahead,
An' my auld teethless Bawtie's dead;
The toolzie's teugh 'tween Pitt an' Fox,
An' our guidwife's wee birdy cocks;
The tane is game, a bluidy devil,
But to the *hen-birds* unco civil;
The tither's dour, has nae sic breedin',
But better stuff ne'er claw'd a midden!

Ye ministers, come mount the pulpit,
An' cry till ye be hearse an' rupit;
For *Eighty-eight*, he wish'd you weel
An' gied you a' baith gear an' meal;
E'en mony a plack, an' mony a peck,
Ye ken yoursels, for little feck!

Ye bonnie lasses dight your een,
For some o' you hae tint a frien';
In *Eighty-eight*, ye ken, was ta'en
What ye'll ne'er hae to gi'e again.

Observe the very nowt an' sheep,
How dowff an' dowie now they creep;
Nay, even the yirth itsel' does cry,
For Embro' wells are grutten dry.

O *Eighty-nine* thou's but a bairn,
An' no owre auld, I hope, to learn!
Thou beardless boy, I pray tak' care,
Thou now has got thy daddy's chair,
Nae hand-cuff'd, mizzled, haff-shackl'd *Regent*,
But, like himsel', a full free agent.
Be sure ye follow out the plan
Nae waur than he did, honest man!
As meikle better as you can.

January 1, 1789.

VERSES

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW OF THE INN AT CARRON.

We cam na here to view your warks
In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
It may be nae surprise:
But when we tirl'd at your door,
Your porter dought na hear us;
Sae may, should we to hell's yetts come
Your billy Satan sair us!

LINES WRITTEN BY BURNS,

WHILE ON HIS DEATH-BED, TO J—N R—K—N., AYRSHIRE, AND FORWARDED TO HIM IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE POET'S DEATH.

He who of R—k—n sang, lies stiff and dead,
And a green grassy hillock hides his head;
Alas! alas! a devilish change indeed!

At a meeting of the DUMFRIES-SHIRE VOLUNTEERS, held to commemorate the anniversary of RODNEY'S victory, April 12th, 1782, BURNS was called upon for a Song, instead of which he delivered the following LINES:

INSTEAD of a song, boys, I'll give you a toast,
Here's the memory of those on the twelfth that we lost;—
That we lost, did I say, nay, by heav'n! that we found,
For their fame it shall last while the world goes round.
The next in succession, I'll give you the King,
Whoe'er would betray him on high may he swing;
And here's the grand fabric, our free Constitution,
As built on the base of the great Revolution;
And longer with Politics not to be cramm'd,
Be Anarchy curs'd, and be Tyranny damn'd;
And who would to Liberty e'er prove disloyal,
May his son be a hangman, and he is first trial.

THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

Bonny lassie will ye go, will ye go, will ye go,
Bonny lassie will ye go, to the Birks of Aberfeldy?

Now summer blinks on flowery braes,
And o'er the crystal streamlet plays,
Come let us spend the lightsome days
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
The little birdies blythely sing,
Or lightly flit on wanton wing
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

The braes ascend like lofty wa's,
The foaming stream deep-roaring fa's,
O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws,
The birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,
White o'er the linns the burnie pours,
And rising, weets wi' misty showers
The birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

Let fortune's gifts at random flee,
They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,
Supremely blest wi' love and thee
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

STAY, MY CHARMER, CAN YOU LEAVE ME?

TUNE—"An Gille dubh ciar dhubh."

STAY, my charmer can you leave me?
Cruel, cruel to deceive me!
Well you know how much you grieve me;
Cruel charmer, can you go?
Cruel charmer, can you go?

By my love so ill-requited;
By the faith you fondly plighted;
By the pangs of lovers slighted;
Do not, do not leave me so!
Do not, do not leave me so!

STRATHALLAN'S LAMENT.

THICKEST night o'erhangs my dwelling!
Howling tempests o'er me rave!
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
Still surround my lonely cave!

Chrystal streamlets gently flowing,
Busy haunts of base mankind,
Western breezes, softly blowing,
Suit not thy distracted mind.

In the cause of right engaged,
Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honour's war we strongly waged,
But the heavens deny'd success.

Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
Not a hope that dare attend,
The wide world is all before us—
But a world without a friend!

THE YOUNG HIGHLAND ROVER.

TUNE—"Morag."

LOUD blaw the frosty breezes,
The snaws the mountains cover;
Like winter on me seizes,
Since my young highland rover
Far wanders nations over.
Where'er he go, where'er he stray,
May heaven be his warden:

Return him safe to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon !

The trees now naked groaning,
Shall soon wi' leaves be hinging,
The birdies dowie moaning,
Shall a' be blythely singing,
And every flower be springing.
Sae I'll rejoice the lee-lang day,
When by his mighty warden
My youth's returned to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon.*

RAVING WINDS AROUND HER BLOWING.

TUNE—"M'Grigor of Ruaro's Lament."

RAVING winds around her blowing
Yellow leaves the woodlands strowing,
By a river hoarsely roaring,
Isabella stray'd deploring.
"Farewell, hours that late did measure
Sunshine days of joy and pleasure;
Hail, thou gloomy night of sorrow,
Cheerless night that knows no morrow.

"O'er the past too fondly wandering,
On the hopeless future pondering;
Chilly grief my life-blood freezes,
Fell despair my fancy seizes.
Life, thou soul of every blessing,
Load to misery more distressing,
O how gladly I'd resign thee,
And to dark oblivion join thee !"

MUSING ON THE ROARING OCEAN.

TUNE—"Druimion dubh."

MUSING on the roaring ocean,
Which divides my love and me;
Wearying heaven in warm devotion,
For his weal where'er he be.

Hope and fear's alternate billow
Yielding late to nature's law,
Whisp'ring spirits round my pillow
Talk of him that's far awa.

Ye whom sorrow never wounded,
Ye who never shed a tear,
Care-troubled, joy-surrounded,
Gaudy day to you is dear.

Gentle night, do thou befriend me:
Downy sleep the curtain draw;
Spirits kind, again attend me,
Talk of him that's far awa !

* The young Highland rover is supposed to be the young Chavalier, Prince Charles Edward.

BLYTHE WAS SHE.

Blythe, blythe and merry was she,
Blythe was she but and ben;
Blythe by the banks of Ern,
And blythe in Glenturit glen.

By Oughtertyre grows the aik,
On Yarrow banks, the birkin shaw,
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw.
Blythe, &c.

Her looks were like a flow'r in May,
Her smile was like a simmer morn;
She tripped by the banks of Ern,
As light's a bird upon a thorn.
Blythe, &c.

Her bonnie face it was as meek
As ony lamb upon a lee;
The evening sun was ne'er sae sweet
As was the blink o' Phemie's e'e.
Blythe, &c.

The Highland hills I've wander'd wide,
And o'er the Lowlands I hae been;
But Phemie was the blythest lass
That ever trod the dewy green.
Blythe, &c.

A ROSE-BUD BY MY EARLY WALK.

A ROSE-BUD by my early walk
Adown a corn-inclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.

Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush, her covert nest
A little linnet fondly prest,
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.

She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedewed,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jenny fair,
On trembling string or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care
That tents thy early morning.

So thou, sweet rose-bud, young and gay
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watched thy early morning

WHERE BRAVING ANGRY WINTER'S STORMS.

TUNE—"N. Gow's Lamentation for Abercairny."

WHERE braving angry winter's storms,
The lofty Ochils rise,
Far in their shade my Peggy's charms
First blest my wondering eyes.
As one who by some savage stream,
A lonely gem surveys,
Astonished doubly marks its beam,
With art's most polished blaze.

Blest be the wild, sequester'd shade,
And blest the day and hour,
Where Peggy's charms I first survey'd,
When first I felt their pow'r!
The tyrant Death, with grim control,
May seize my fleeting breath;
But tearing Peggy from my soul
Must be a stronger death.

TIBBIE I HAE SEEN THE DAY.

TUNE—"Invercauld's Reel."

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day
Ye would na been sae shy;
For laik o' gear ye lightly me,
But troth, I care na by.

YESTREEN I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure;
Ye geck at me because I'm poor,
But fient a hair care I.
O Tibbie I hae, &c.

I doubt na lass, but you may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink,
That you can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

But sorrow tak him that's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy quean
That looks sae proud and high.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt,
And answer him fu' dry.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear,
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he, for sense or lear,
Be better than the kye.
O Tibbe, I hae, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice,
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice:
The deil a ane wad spier your price,
Were ye as poor as I.
O Tibbe, I hae, &c.

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I would nae gie her under sark,
For thee wi' a' thy thousand mark;
Ye need na look sae high.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

CLARINDA.

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measur'd time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole,
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie;
Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,
The sun of all his joy.

We part,—but by these precious drops,
That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps,
Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
Has blest my glorious day:
And shall a glimmering planet fix
My worship to its ray?

THE DAY RETURNS, MY BOSOM BURNS.

Tune—"Seventh of November,"

The day returns, my bosom burns
The blissful day we twa did meet,
Tho' winter wild in tempest toil'd.
Ne'er summer sun was half sae sweet:
Than a' the pride that loads the tide,
And crosses o'er the sultry line;
Than kingly robes, than crown and globes,
Heaven gave me more, it made thee mine.

While day and night can bring delight,
Or nature ought of pleasure give!
While joys above, my mind can move,
For thee, and thee alone, I live!
When that grim foe of life below,
Comes in between to make us part;
The iron hand that breaks our band,
It breaks my bliss—it breaks my heart.

THE LAZY MIST.

The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill,
Concealing the course of the dark winding rill;

How languid the scenes, late so sprightly, appear,
As autumn resigns the pale year,
The forests are leafless, the meadows are brown,
And all the gay foppery of summer is flown:
Apart let me wander, apart let me muse,
How quick time is flying, how keen fate pursues;
How long I have liv'd—but how much liv'd in vain!
How little of life's scanty span may remain:
What aspects old Time, in his progress, has worn;
What ties cruel Fate in my bosom has torn.
How foolish, or worse, till our summit is gain'd!
And downward, how weaken'd, how darken'd, how pain'd
This life's not worth having with all it can give.
For something beyond it poor man sure must live.

O, WERE I ON PARNASSUS HILL.

Tune—"My love is lost to me."

O WERE I on Parnassus hill!
Or had of Helicon my fill!
That I might catch poetic skill,
To sing how dear I love thee.
But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonnie sel';
On Corsincon I'll glower and spell,
And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet muse, inspire my lay!
For a' the lee-long simmer's day,
I coulda sing, I coulda say,
How much, how dear, I love thee,
I see thee dancing o'er the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,
Thy tempting lips, thy roguish e'en—
By heaven and earth I love thee.

By night, by day, a field, at hame,
The thoughts of thee my breast inflame;
And aye I muse and sing thy name;
I only live to love thee,
Tho' I were doom'd to wander on,
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,
'Till my last, weary sand was run;
'Till then—and then I love thee.

I LOVE MY JEAN.

Tune—"Miss Admiral Gordon's Strathspey."

OF a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me a' my Jean.

THE BRAES O' BALLOCHMYLE.

The Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decayed on Catrine lee,
The lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But nature sicken'd on the e'e.
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel' in beauty's bloom the while,
And aye the wild wood echoes rang,
Farewele the braes o' Ballochmyle.

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in withering bowers,
Again ye'll charm the vocal air.
But here, alas! for me nae mair,
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, Fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

WILLIE BREW'D A PECK O' MAUT.

O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan cam to pree;
Three blyther lads that lee lang night,
Ye wad na find on Christendie.

"We are nae fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And aye we'll taste the barley bree."

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mair we hope to be!
"We are nae fou," &c.

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But by my troth she'll wait a wee!
We are na fou, &c.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward, loun is he!
Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three!
We are na fou, &c.

THE BLUE-EYED LASSIE.

I GAED a waefu' gate yestreen,
A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet e'en,
Twa lovely e'en o' bonnie blue.
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright;
Her lips like roses wat wi' dew,
Her heaving bosom, lily-white—
It was her e'en sae bonnie blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyld,
She charm'd my soul I wist na how;
And aye the stound, the deadly wound,
Cam frae her e'en sae bonnie blue,
But spare to speak, and spare to speed;
She'll aiblins listen to my vow:
Should she refuse, I'll lay my dead
To her twa e'en sae bonny blue.

THE BANKS OF NITH.

Tune—"Robie Donna Gorach,"

THE Thames flows proudly to the sea,
Where royal cities stand;
But sweeter flows the Nith to me,
Where Cummins an ce had high command:
When shall I see that honoured land,
That winding stream I love so dear!
Must wayward fortune's adverse hand,
For ever, ever, keep me here.

How lovely, Nith, thy fruitful vales,
Where spreading hawthorns gaily bloom;
How sweetly wind thy sloping dales
Where lambkins wanton thro' the broom!
Tho' wandering, now, must be my doom,
Far from thy bonnie banks and braes,
May there my latest hours consume,
Amang the friends of early days!

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO.

JOHN ANDERSON, my jo, John, I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning, and sit up so late at e'en,
Ye'll blear out a' your e'en John, and why should you do so,
Gang sooner to your bed at e'en, John ANDERSON, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, when nature first began
To try her canny hand, John, her master-work was *man*;
And you amang them a', John, sae trig frae top to toe,
She proved to be nae journey-work, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John you were my first conceit,
And ye na think it strange, John, tho' I ca' ye trim and neat;
Tho' some folk say ye're auld, John, I never think ye so,
But I think ye're aye the same to me, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, we've seen our bairns' bairns,
And yet, my dear John Anderson, I'm happy in your arms,

And sae are you in mine, John—I'm sure ye'll ne'er say no,
Tho' the days are gane, that we hae seen, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, what pleasure does it gie
To see sae many sprouts, John, spring up 'tween you and me,
And ilka lad and lass, John, in our footsteps to go,
Makes perfect heaven here on earth, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, when we were first acquaint,
Your locks were like the raven, your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your head's turned bald, John, your locks are like the snaw;
Yet blessings on your frosty pow, John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, frae year to year we've past
And soon that year maun come, John, will bring us to our last:
But let nae that affright us, John, our hearts were ne'er our foe,
While in innocent delight we lived, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, we clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John, w've had wi' ane anither.
Now we maun totter down, John, but hand in hand we'll go:
And we'll sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson my jo.

TAM GLEN.

My heart is a-breaking, dear tittie,
Some counsel unto me come len',
To anger them a' is a pity,
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,
In poortith I might mak a fen;
What care I in riches to wallow,
If I maunna marry Tam Glen.

There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller,
"Guide day to you, brute," he comes ben:
He brags and he blaws o' his siller,
But when will he dance like Tam Glen?

My minnie does constantly deave me,
And bids me beware o' young men;
They flatter, she says, to deceive me,
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen!

My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,
He'll gie me gude hunder marks ten:
But, if it's ordain'd I maun tak him,
O wha will I get like Tam Glen?

Yestreen at the Valentine's dealing,
My heart to my mou gied a sten;
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written Tam Glen.

The last Hallowe'en I was waukin
My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken;
His likeness cam up the house staukin,
And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen!

Come counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry;
I'll gie you my bonnie black hen,
Gin ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

MY TOCHER'S THE JEWEL.

O MEIKLE thinks my luve o' my beauty,
And meikle thinks my luve o' my kin;
But little thinks my luve I ken brawlie,
My tocher's the jewel has charms for him.
It's a' for the apple he'll nourish the tree;
It's a' for the hinney he'll cherish the bee,
My laddie's sae meikle in luve wi' the siller,
He canna hae luve to spare for me.

Your proffer o' luve's an arle penny,
My tocher's the bargain ye wad buy;
But an' ye be crafty, I am cunnin,
Sae ye wi' anither your fortune maun try.
Ye're like to the timmer o' yon rotten wood,
Ye're like to the bark o' yon rotten tree,
Ye'll slip frae me like a knotless thread,
And ye'll crack your credit wi' mae nor me.

THEN GUIDEWIFE COUNT THE LAWIN.

GANE is the day and mirk's the night,
But we'll ne'er stray for faute o' light
For ale and brandy's stars and moon,
And bluid red wine's the risin sun.

Then guidwife count the lawin, the lawin, the lawin,
Then guidwife count the lawin, and bring a coggie mair,

There's wealth an' ease for gentlemen,
And semple folk maun fecht and fen;
But here we're a' in ae accord,
For ilka man that's drunk's a lord.
Then guidwife count, &c.

My coggie is a haly pool,
That heals the wounds o' care and dool;
And pleasure is a' wanton trout,
An' ye drink it a' ye'll find him out.
Then guidwife count, &c.

HAT CAN A YOUNG LASSIE DO WI' AN AULD MAN.

WHAT can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?
Bad luck on the pennie that tempted my minnie
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an' lan'!
Bad luck on the pennie, &c.

He's always complecnin frae mornin to e'enin,
He hosts and he hirples the weary day lang,
He's doy'lt and he's dozin, his bluid it is frozen
O' dreary's the night wi' a crazy auld man!

He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers;
I never can please him, do a' that I can;
He's peevish, and jealous of a' the young fellows,
O, dool on the day, I met wi' an auld man!

My auld auntie Katie upon me takes pity,
I'll do my endeavour to follow her plan;
I'll cross him, and wrack him, until I heart-break him,
And then his auld brass will buy me a new pan.

THE BONNIE WEE THING.

Bonnie wee thing, cannie wee thing,
Lovely wee thing, was thou mine;
I wad wear thee in my bosom,
Lest my jewel I should tine.

Wistfully I look and languish,
In that bonnie face of thine;
And my heart it stounds wi' anguish,
Lest my wee thing be na mine.

Wit, and grace, and love, and beauty,
In ae constellation shine
To adore thee is my duty,
Goddess o' this soul o' mine!
Bonnie wee, &c.

O, FOR ANE AND TWENTY TAM.

Tune—"The Moudiewort."

An' O, for ane and twenty, Tam!
An' hey, sweet ane and twenty, Tam!
I'll learn my kin a rattlin sang,
An' I saw ane and twenty, Tam.

They snool me sair, and haud me down,
And gar me look like bluntie, Tam:
But three short years will soon wheel roun',
And then comes ane and twenty, Tam.
An' O, for ane, &c.

A gleib o' lan', a claut o' gear,
Was left me by my auntie, Tam;
At kith or kin I need na spier,
An' I saw ane and twenty, Tam.
An' O, for ane, &c.

They'll hae me wed a wealthy coof,
Tho' I mysel hae plenty, Tam;
But hear'st thou laddie, there's my loof,
I'm thine at ane and twenty, Tam!
An' O, for ane, &c.

BESS AND HER SPINNING WHEEL.

O leeze me on my spinning wheel,
O leeze me on my rock and reel;
Frae tap to tae that cleeds me bien,
And haps me fiel and warm at e'en!

I'll set me down and sing and spin,
While laigh descends the simmer sun,
Blest wi' content, and milk and meal—
O leeze me on my spinning wheel.

On ilka hand the burnies trot,
And meet below thy theekit cot;
The scented birk and hawthorn white
Across the pool their arms unite,
Alike to screen the bridie's nest,
And little fishes' caller rest;
The sun blinks kindly in the biel',
Where, blythe I turn my spinning wheel.

On lofty aiks the cushats wail,
And echo cons the doolfu' tale;
The lintwhites in the hazel braes,
Delighted, rival ither's lays:
The craik amang the claver hay,
The paitrick whirrin o'er the ley,
The swallow jinking round my shiel,
Amuse me at my spinning wheel.

Wi' sma' to sell, and less to buy,
Aboon distress, below envy,
O wha wad leave this humble state,
For a' the pride of a' the great?
Amid their flairing, idle toys,
Amid their cumbrous, dinsome joys,
Can they the peace and pleasure feel,
Of Bessy at her spinning wheel.

COUNTRY LASSIE.

In simmer when the hay was mawn,
And corn wav'd green in ilka field,
While claver blooms white o'er the lea,
And roses blaw in ilka bield;
Blythe Bessie in the milking shiel,
Says, I'll be wed come o't what will;
Out spake a dame in wrinkled eild,
O' gude advisement comes nae ill.

Its ye hae wooers mony a ane,
And, lassie, ye're but young, ye ken;
Then wait a wee, and cannie wale,
A routhie butt, a routhie ben:
There's Johnie o' the Buskie-glen,
Fu' is his barn, fu' is his byre;
Tak this frae me, my bonnie hen,
It's plenty beets the luver's fire.

For Johnie o' the Buskie-glen,
I dinna care a single flie;
He lo'es sae weel his craps and kye,
He has nae luve to spare for me:
But blythe's the blink o' Robin's e'e,
And weel I wat he lo'es me dear:

Ae blink o' him I wad na gie
For Buskie glen and a' his gear.

O thoughtless lassie, life's a faught,
The canniest gate, the strife is sair;
But aye fu' han't is fechtin' best,
A hungry care's an unco care:
But some will spend, and some will spare,
And wilfu' folk maun hae their will;
Syne as ye brew, my maiden fair,
Keep mind that ye maun drink the yill.

O gear will buy me rigs o' land,
And gear will buy me sheep and kye;
But the tender heart o' leesome luve,
The gowd and siller canna buy:
We may be poor, Robie and I,
Light is the burden luve lays on;
Content and love brings peace and joy,
What mair hae queens upon a throne?

FAIR ELIZA.

A GAELIC AIR.

Turn again, thou fair Eliza,
Ae kind blink before we part,
Rew on thy despairing lover!
Canst thou break his faithfu' heart!
Turn again, thou fair Eliza;
If to love thy heart denies,
For pity hide the cruel sentence
Under friendship's kind disguise!

Thee, dear maid, hae I offended?
The offence is loving thee:
Canst thou wreck his peace for ever,
Wha for thine wad gladly die!
While the life beats in my bosom,
Thou shalt mix in ilka throe:
Turn again, my lovely maiden,
Ae sweet smile on me bestow.

Not the bee upon the blossom,
In the pride o' sinny noon;
Not the little sporting fairy,
All beneath the simmer moon;
Not the poet at the moment
Fancy lightens on his e'e,
Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture,
That thy presence gies to me.

THE POSIE.

O Luve will venture in, where it daur na weel be seen,
O luve will venture in where wisdom ance has been:
But I will down yon river rove, amang the wood sae green,
And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May.

The primrose I will pu', the firstling o' the year,
And I will pu' the pink, the emblem o' my dear,
For she's the pink o' womankind, and blooms without a pear:
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll pu' the budding rose, when Phœbus peeps in view,
For it's like a baumy kiss o' her sweet bonnie mou;
The hyacinth's for constancy, wi' its unchanging blue:
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The lily it is pure, and the lily it is fair,
And in her lovely bosom I'll place the lily there;
The daisy's for simplicity and unaffected air,
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The hawthorn I will pu', wi' its locks o' siller grey,
Where, like an aged man, it stands at break o' day;
But the songster's nest within the bush I winna tak away:
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The woodbine I will pu' when the e'ening star is near,
And the diamond drops o' dew shall be her een sae clear;
The violet for modesty, which weel she fa's to wear:
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll tie the posie round wi' the silken band o' luve,
And I'll place it in her breast, and swear by a' above,
That to my latest draught o' life the band shall ne'er remuve,
And this will be a posie to my ain dear May.

THE BANKS O' DOON.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!
Thou'll break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return!

Oft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And, fondly, sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover stole my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

SIC A WIFE AS WILLIE HAD.

Willie Wastle dwelt on Tweed,
The spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie;
Willie was a wabster gude,
Cou'd stown a clue wi' ony bodie;
He had a wife was dour and din,
O Tinkler Madgie was her mither;

Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.

She has an e'e, she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very colour;
Five rusty teeth, forbye a stump,
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller;
A whiskin beard about her mou,
Her nose and chin they threaten ither;
Sic a wife, &c.

She's bow hough'd, she's hein shinn'd,
Ae limpin leg a hand-breed shorter;
She's twisted right, she's twisted left,
To balance fair in ilka quarter:
She has a hump upon her breast,
The twin o' that upon her shouther;
Sic a wife, &c.

Auld baudrans by the ingle sits,
And wi' her loof her face a-washin;
But Willie's wife is nae sae trig,
She dights her grunzie wi' a hushion;
Her walie nieves like midden creels,
Her face wad fyle the Logan-water;

Sic a wife as Willlie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.

GLOOMY DECEMBER.

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December,
Ance mair I hail thee, wi' sorrow and care;
Sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, Oh! ne'er to meet mair.
Fond lovers parting is sweet painful pleasure,
Hope beaming mild on the soft parting hour;
But the dire feeling, *O farewell for ever*,
Is anguish unmingl'd, and agony pure.

Wild as the winter now tearing the forest,
'Till the last leaf o' the summer is flown,
Such is the tempest has shaken my bosom,
Since my last hope and last comfort is gone;
Still as I hail thee, thou gloomy December,
Still I shall hail thee wi' sorrow and care;
For sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, Oh, ne'er to meet mair.

EVAN BANKS.

Slow spreads the gloom my soul desires,
The sun from India's shore retires;
To Evan banks, with temp'rate ray,
Home of my youth, it leads the day.
Oh! banks to me for ever dear!
Oh! stream whose murmurs still I hear!
All my hopes of bliss reside,
Where Evan mingles with the Clyde.

And she, in simple beauty drest,
Whose image lives within my breast;
Who trembling heard my piercing sigh,
And long pursu'd me with her eye!
Does she, with heart unchang'd as mine,
Oft in the vocal bowers recline?
Or where yon grot o'erhangs the tide,
Muse while the Evan seeks the Clyde.

Ye lofty banks that Evan bound!
Ye lavish woods that reign around,
And o'er the stream your shadows throw,
Which sweetly winds so far below;
What secret charm to mem'ry brings,
All that on Evan's border springs?
Sweet banks! ye bloom by Mary's side:
Blest stream, she views thee haste to Clyde.

Can all the wealth of India's coast
Atone for years in absence lost?
Return, ye moments of delight,
With richer treasures bless my sight!
Swift from this desert let me part,
And fly to meet a kindred heart!
Nor more may aught my steps divide
From that dear stream which flows to Clyde.

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE.

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
And that's the love I bear thee:
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me:
Or, if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou, for thine, may choose me:
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me,
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

SHE'S FAIR AND FAUSE.

She's fair and fause that causes my smart,
I lo'ed her meikle and lang;
She's broken her vow, she's broken my heart,
And I may e'en gae hang.
A coof cam in with routh o' gear,
And I hae tint my dearest dear,

But woman is but warld's gear,
Sae let the bonnie lass gang,

Whae'er ye be that woman love,
To this be never blind,
Nae ferlie 'tis tho' fickle she prove,
A woman has't by kind:
O woman, lovely woman, fair!
An angel form's faun to thy share,
'Twad been o'er meikle to gien thee mair,
I mean an angel mind.

AFTON WATER.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among the green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by the murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with courses of clear winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow:
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

BONNIE BELL.

The smiling Spring comes in rejoicing,
And surly Winter grimly flies;
Now crystal clear are the falling waters,
And bonnie blue are the sunny skies;
Fresh o'er the mountains breaks forth the morning,
The ev'ning gilds the ocean's swell;
All creatures joy in the sun's returning,
And I rejoice in my bonnie Bell.

The flow'ry Spring leads sunny Summer,
And yellow Autumn presses near,
Then in his turn comes gloomy Winter,
'Till smiling Spring again appear.

Thus seasons dancing, life advancing,
Old Time and Nature their changes tell,
But never ranging, still unchanging
I adore my bonnie Bell.

THE GALLANT WEAVER.

Where Cart rins rowin to the sea,
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree,
There lives a lad, the lad for me,
He is a gallant weaver.

Oh I had wooers aught or nine,
They gied me rings and ribbons fine;
And I was fear'd my heart would tine,
And I gied it to the weaver.

My daddie sign'd my tocher-band
To gie the lad that has the land,
But to my heart I'll add my hand,
And give it to the weaver.

While birds rejoice in leafy bowers;
While bees delight in opening flowers;
While corn grows green in simmer showers,
I'll love my gallant weaver.*

LOUIS, WHAT RECK I BY THEE.

Louis, what reck I by thee,
Or Geordie on his ocean;
Dyvor beggar louns to me,
I reign in Jeanie's bosom.

Let her crown my love her law,
And in her breast enthrone me:
Kings and nations, swith awa!
Reif randies I disown ye!

FOR THE SAKE OF SOMEBODY.

My heart is sair, I dare nae tell,
My heart is sair for somebody;
I could wake a winter night
For the sake of somebody.
Oh-hon! for somebody!
Oh-hey! for somebody!
I could range the world around,
For the sake of somebody

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,
O sweetly smile on somebody!
Frae ilka danger keep him free,
And send me safe my somebody
Oh-hon! for somebody!
Oh-hey! for somebody!
I wad do—what wad I not,
For the sake of somebody!

* In some editions Sailor is substituted for Weaver.

THE LOVELY LASS OF INVERNESS.

THE lovely lass o' Inverness,
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;
For e'en and morn she cries, alas!
And aye the saut tear blins her e'e;
Drumossie moor, Drumossie day,
A waefu' day it was to me;
For there I lost my father dear,
My father dear, and brethren three.

Their winding sheet the bloody clay,
Their graves are growing green to see;
And by them lies the dearest lad
That ever blest a woman's e'e!
Now wae to thee, thou cruel lord,
A bluidy man I trow thou be;
For mony a heart thou hast made sair,
That ne'er did wrong to thine or thee.

A MOTHER'S LAMENT FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON.

TUNE.—"Finlayston House."

FATE gave the word, the arrow sped,
And pierced my darling's heart:
And with him all the joys are fled
Life can to me impart.
By cruel hands the sapling drops,
In dust dishonour'd laid:
So fell the pride of all my hopes,
My age's future shade.

The mother linnet in the brake
Bewails her ravished young;
So I for my lost darling's sake,
Lament the live-day long.
Death, oft I've fear'd thy fatal blow,
Now fond I bare my breast,
O do thou kindly lay me low
With him I love at rest!

O MAY, THY MORN.

O MAY, thy morn was ne'er sae sweet,
As the mirk night o' December;
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And private was the chamber:
And dear was she I darna name,
But I will aye remember
And dear, &c.

And here's to them, that like oursel,
Can push about the jorum;
And here's to them that wish us weel,
May a' that's gude watch o'er them;
And here's to them, we darna tell,
The dearest o' the quorum,
And here's to, &c.

O WHAT YE WHA'S IN YON TOWN.

O WHAT ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'ening sun upon,
The fairest dame's in yon town,
That e'ening sun is shining on.

Now haply down yon gay green shaw,
She wanders by yon spreading tree;
How blest ye flow'rs that mind her blaw,
Ye catch the glances o' her e'e.

How blest ye birds that round her sing,
And welcome in the blooming year,
And doubly welcome be the spring,
The season to my Lucy dear.

The sun blinks blythe on yon town,
And on yon bonnie braes of Ayr;
But my delight in yon town,
And dearest bliss is Lucy fair.

Without my love, not a' the charms,
O' paradise could yield me joy;
But gie me Lucy in my arms,
And welcome Lapland's dreary sky.

My cave wad be a lover's bower,
Tho' raging winter rent the air;
And she a lovely little flower,
That I wad tent and shelter there.

O sweet is she in yon town,
Yon sinkin sun's gane down upon:
A fairer than's in yon town,
His setting beam ne'er shone upon.

If angry fate has sworn my foe,
And suffering I am doom'd to bear;
I careless quit aught else below,
But spare me, spare me, Lucy dear.

For while life's dearest blood is warm,
Ae thought frae her shall ne'er depart,
And she—as fairest is her form!
She has the truest kindest heart.

A RED, RED ROSE.

O MY love's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June,
O my love's like the melody,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;

I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love,
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

A VISION.

As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa'-flower scents the dewy air,
Where th' howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
And tells the midnight moon her care.

The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot alang the sky;
The fox was howling on the hill,
And the distant echoing glens reply.

The stream adown its hazelly path,
Was rushing by the ruin'd wa's,
Hasting to join the sweeping Nith,
Whase distant roaring swells and fa's.

The cauld blue north was streaming forth
Her lights, wi' hissing eerie din;
Athort the lift they start and shift,
Like fortune's favours, tint as win.

By heedless chance I turn'd mine eyes,
And, by the moon-beam, shook to see
A stern and stalwart ghaist arise,
Attir'd as minstrels wont to be.

Had I a statue been of stane,
His darin look had daunted me;
And on his bonnet grav'd was plain,
The sacred posie—Liberty!

And frae his harp sic strains did flow,
Might roused the slumb'ring dead to hear;
But oh, it was a tale of woe,
As ever met a Briton's ear!

He sang wi' joy his former day,
He weeping wail'd his latter times;
But what he said it was nae play,
I winna ventur't in my rhymes.

COPY OF A POETICAL ADDRESS
TO
MR. WILLIAM TYTLER,
WITH THE PRESENT OF THE BARD'S PICTURE.

Revered defender of beauteous Stuart,
Of Stuart, a name once respected;
A name, which to love was the mark of a true heart,
But now 'tis despised and neglected:

Tho' something like moisture conglobes in my eye
Let no one misdeem me disloyal;
A poor friendless wand'rer may well claim a sigh,
Still more, if that wand'rer were royal.

My fathers, that name have rever'd on a throne;
My fathers have fallen to right it;
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
That name should he scoffingly slight it.

Still in prayers for King George I most heartily join,
The Queen and the rest of the gentry,
Be they wise, be they foolish, is nothing of mine;
Their title's avow'd by the country.

But why of that epocha make such a fuss,
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

But loyalty, truce! we're on dangerous ground,
Who knows how the fashions may alter,
The doctrine, to day that is loyalty sound,
To-morrow may bring us a halter.

I send you a trifle, a head of a bard,
A trifle scarce worthy your care;
But accept it, good sir, as a mark of regard,
Sincere as a saint's dying prayer.

Now life's chilly evening dim shades on your eye,
And ushers the long dreary night;
But you, like the star that awthwart gilds the sky,
Your course to the latest is bright.

My muse jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces. Do me the justice to believe me sincere in my grateful remembrance of the many civilities you have honoured me with since I came to Edinburgh, and in assuring you that I have the honour to be,

Revered Sir,
Your obliged and very humble Servant,
BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1787.

CALEDONIA.

Tune.—"Caledonian Hunt's Delight."

There was once a day, but old Time then was young,
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt, or to pasture, or to do what she would:
Her heavenly relations there fixed her reign,
And pledg'd her their godheads to warrant it good.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred the heroine grew:
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore,—
Whoe'er shall provoke thee th' encounter shall rue,

With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn,
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement, the hounds and the horn.

Long quiet she reigned; 'till thitherward steers
A flight of young eagles from Adria's strand:
Repeated, successive, for many long years,
They darken'd the air, and they plundered the land:
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,
They'd conquer'd and ruin'd a world beside:
She took to her hills and her arrows let fly,
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

The fell Harpy-raven took wing from the north,
The scourge of the seas, and the dread of the shore;
The wild Scandinavian boar issued forth
To wanton in carnage, and wallow in gore:
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
No arts could appease them, nor arms could repel;
But brave Caledonia in vain they assail'd,
As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell.

The Cameleon-savage disturb'd her repose,
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion and strife;
Provoked beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life:
The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
Oft prowling, ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood;
But taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
He learned to fear in his own native wood.

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run:
For brave Caledonia immortal must be;
I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle triangle, the figure we'll choose,
The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base;
But brave Caledonia's the hypothenuse;
Then ergo she'll match them, and match them always.

THE FOLLOWING POEM

WAS WRITTEN TO A GENTLEMAN WHO HAD SENT HIM A NEWSPAPER, AND OFFERED TO CONTINUE IT FREE OF EXPENSE.

Kind sir, I've read your paper through,
And faith, to me, 'twas really new!
How guessed ye, sir, what maist I wanted?
This mony a day I've grain'd and grunted,
To ken what French mischief was brewin';
Or what the drumlie Dutch were doin';
That vile doup skelper, Emperor Joseph,
If Venus yet had got his nose off;
Or how the collieshangie works
Atween the Russian and the Turks;
Or if the Swede before he halt,
Would play anither Charles the Twalt!

If Denmark, ony body spak o't;
Or Poland, wha had now the tack o't;
How cut-throat Prussian blades were hingin';
How libbet Italy was singin';
If Spaniard, Portuguese, or Swiss,
Were sayin or takin ought amiss:
Or how our merry lads at hame,
In Britain's court kept up the game:
How royal George, the Lord leuk o'er him!
Was managing St. Stephen's quorum;
If sleekit Chatham Will was livin',
Or glaikit Charlie got his nieve in;
How daddie Burke the plea was cookin,
If Warren Hastings' neck was yeukin;
How cesses, stents, and fees were raxed,
Or if bare a— yet were taxed;
The news o' princes, dukes, and earls,
Pimps, sharpers, bawds, and opera-girls;
If that daft Buckie, Geordie Wales,
Was threshin still at hizzies' tails,
Or if he was growin oughtlins douser,
And no a perfect kintra cooser.—
A' this and mair I never heard of;
And, but for you, I might despair'd of.
So gratefu', back your news I send you.
And pray, a' guid things may attend you!

ELLISLAND, Monday Morning, 1790.

POEM.

ON PASTORAL POETRY.

HAIL Poesie! thou nymph reserved!
In chase o' thee, what crowds hae swerved
Frae common sense, or sunk enerved
'Mang heaps o' clavers;
And och! o'er aft thy joes hae starved,
'Mid a' thy favours!

Say, Lassie, why thy train amang,
While loud the trump's heroic clang,
And sock or buskin skelp alang
To death or marriage;
Scarce ane has tried the shepherd-sang
But wi' miscarriage?

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives;
Eschylus' pen Will Shakespeare drives;
Wee Pope, the knurlin, 'till him rives
Horatian fame;
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld, survives
Even Sappho's flame.

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
They're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches;
Squire Pope but busks his skinlin patches
O' heathen tatters:
I pass by hunders, nameless wretches,
That ape their betters.

In this braw age o' wit and lear,
Will nane the Shepherd's whistle mair
Blaw sweetly in its native air
And rural grace;
And wi' the far-famed Grecian share
A rival place?

Yes! there is ane; a Scottish callan!
There's ane; come forrit, honest Allan!
Thou need na jouk behint the hallan,
A chiel so clever;
The teeth o' time may gnaw Tamtallan,
But thou's for ever.

Thou paints auld nature to the nines,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream thro' myrtles twines,
Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
Her griefs will tell!

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes;
Or trots by hazelly shaws or braes,
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel;
Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell;
Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell
O' witchin' love,
That charm that can the strongest quell,
The sternest move.

THE BATTLE OF SHERIFF-MUIR.

BETWEEN THE DUKE OF ARGYLE AND THE EARL OF MAR.

"O CAM ye here the fight to shun,
Or herd the sheep wi' me, man?
Or were ye at the Sherra-muir,
And did the battle see, man?
I saw the battle sair and teugh,
And reekin-red ran monie a sheugh,
My heart for fear gae sough for sough,
To hear the thuds, and see the cluds
O' clans frae woods, in tartan duds,
Wha glaum'd at kingdoms three, man.

The red-coat lads wi' black cockades,
To meet them were na slaw, man;
They rush'd and push'd, and bluid outgush'd,
And mony a bouk did fa', man:
The great Argyle led on his files,
I wat they glanced twenty miles!
They hack'd and hash'd, while broadswords clash'd,
And thro' they dash'd, and hew'd and smash'd,
Till fey men died awa, man.

But had you seen the philibegs,
And skyrin tartan trews, man,
When in the teeth they dar'd our whigs,
And covenant true blues, man;
In lines extended lang and large,
When bayonets opposed the targe,
And thousands hastened to the charge,
Wi' highland wrath they frae the sheath,
Drew blades o' death, till out o' breath,
They fled like frighted doos, man.

"O how deil Tam can that be true?
The chase gaed frae the north, man:
I saw myself, they did pursue
The horseman back to Forth, man;
And at Dumblane, in my ain sight,
They took the brig wi' a' their might,
And straught to Stirling winged their flight;
But, cursed lot! the gates were shut
And money a hunted poor red coat
For fear amaist did swarf, man."

My sister Kate came up the gate
Wi' crowdie unto me, man:
She swoor she saw some rebels run,
Frae Perth unto Dundee, man;
Their left-hand general had nae skill,
The Angus lads had nae good will
That day their neebor's blood to spill;
For fear by foes, that they should lose
Their cogs o' brose; all crying woes,
And so it goes, you see, man.

They've lost some gallant gentlemen,
Amang the Highland clans, man;
I fear my Lord Panmure is slain,
Or fallen in whiggish hands, man
Now wad ye sing this double fight,
Some fell for wrang, and some for right;
But mony bade the world gude-night;
Then ye may tell, how pell and mell,
By red claymores, and muskets, knell,
Wi' dying yell, the tories fell,
And whigs to hell did flee, man.

SKETCH.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

This day, Time winds th' exhausted chain,
To run the twelvemonths' length again:
I see the old bald-pated fellow,
With ardent eyes, complexion sallow
Adjust the unimpair'd machine,
To wheel the equal dull routine.

The absent lover, minor heir,
In vain assail him with their prayer.
Deaf as my friend he sees them press,
Nor makes the hour one moment less.
Will you (the Major's with the hounds,
The happy tenants share his rounds;
Coila's fair Rachel's care to-day,
And blooming Keith's engaged with Gray;)
From housewife cares a minute borrow—
—That grandchild's cap will do to-morrow—
And join with me a moralizing,
This day's propitious to be wise in.
First, what did yesternight deliver;
"Another year is gone for ever."
And what is this day's strong suggestion!
"The passing moment's all we rest on!"
Rest on—for what! What do we here?
Or why regard the passing year?
Will time, amus'd with proverb'd lore,
Add to our date one minute more?
A few days may—a few years must—
Repose us in the silent dust.
Then, is it wise to damp our bliss?
Yes, all such reasonings are amiss!
The voice of nature loudly cries,
And many a message from the skies,
That something in us never dies:
That on this frail, uncertain state,
Hang matters of eternal weight;
That future-life in worlds unknown
Must take its hue from this alone:
Whether as heavenly glory bright,
Or dark as misery's woeful night—
Since then, my honour'd first of friends,
On this poor being all depends:
Let us th' important *now* employ,
And live as those who never die.
Tho' you, with days and honours crown'd,
Witness that filial circle round,
(A sight life's sorrows to repulse,
A sight pale envy to convulse),
Others now claim your chief regard
Yourself, you wait your bright reward.

EXTEMPORE,

ON THE LATE MR. WILLIAM SMELLIE,

AUTHOR OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURAL HISTORY, AND MEMBER OF THE ANTIQUARIAN AND ROYAL SOCIETIES OF EDINBURGH.

To Crochallan came
The old cock'd hat, the grey surtout, the same;
His bristling beard just rising in its might,
'Twas four long nights and days to shaving night,
His uncombed grizzly locks wild-staring, thatch'd,
A head for thought profound and clear, unmatch'd;

Yet, tho' his caustic wit was biting, rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent and good.

POETICAL INSCRIPTION,

FOR

AN ALTAR TO INDEPENDENCE,

AT KERROUCHTRY, THE SEAT OF MR. HERON.—WRITTEN IN SUMMER 1795.

Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolved, with soul resigned;
Prepared power's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here.

SONNET,

ON

THE DEATH OF MR. RIDDEL.

No more, ye warblers of the wood, no more,
Nor pour your descant grating on my ear:
Thou young-eyed Spring thy charms I cannot bear;
More welcome were to me grim Winter's wildest roar.

How can ye please, ye flowers, with all your dies?
Ye blow upon the sod that wraps my friend:
How can I to the tuneful strain attend?
That strain pours round th' untimely tomb where Riddel lies.

Yes, pour, ye warblers, pour the notes of woe,
And soothe the Virtues weeping on this bier;
The Man of Worth, and has not left his peer,
Is in his 'narrow house' for ever darkly low.

Thee, Spring, again with joy shall others greet;
Me, mem'ry of my loss will only meet.

MONODY

ON

A LADY FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.

How cold is that bosom which folly once fir'd,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glisten'd:
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listened.

If sorrow and anguish their exit await,
From friendship and dearest affection removed;
How doubly severer, Eliza, thy fate,
Thou diedst unwept, as thou livedst unloved.

Loves, graces, and virtues, I call not on you;
So shy, grave, and distant, ye shed not a tear;
But come, all ye offspring of folly so true,
And flowers let us cull for Eliza's cold bier.

We'll search through the garden for each silly flower,
We'll roam through the forest for each idle weed;
But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,
For none e'er approach'd her but rued the rash deed.

We'll sculpture the marble, we'll measure the lay;
Here Vanity strums on her idiot lyre;
There keen indignation shall dart on her prey,
Which spurning contempt shall redeem from his ire.

THE EPITAPH.

Here lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,
What once was a butterfly gay in life's beam:
Want only of wisdom denied her respect,
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

ANSWER TO A MANDATE

SENT BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE WINDOWS, CARRIAGES, &C. TO EACH FARMER, ORDERING HIM TO SEND A LIST OF HIS HORSES, SERVANTS, WHEEL-CARRIAGES, &C. AND WHETHER HE WAS A MARRIED MAN OR A BACHELOR, AND WHAT CHILDREN THEY HAD.

Sir, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,
My horses, servants, carts, and graith,
To which I'm free to tak my aith.
Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew before a pettle.

My *hand-afore*, a guid auld has been
And wight and wilfu' a' his days seen
My *hand-a-hin*, a guid brown filly,
Wha aft has borne me safe frae Killie;
And your auld borough mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime:
My *fur-a-hin* a guid, grey beast,
As e'er in tug or tow was traced:
The fourth, a Highland Donald hasty,
A d-mn'd red-wud, Kilburnie blastie.
For-by a cowte, of cowtes the wale,
As ever ran before a tail;
An' he be spared to be a beast,
He'll draw me fifteen pund at least.

Wheel carriages I hae but few,
Three carts, and twa are feckly new,
An auld wheel-barrow, mair for token,
Ae leg and baith the trams are broken;
I made a poker o' the spindle,
And my auld mither brunt the trundle.
For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run-deils for rantin and for noise;
A gadsman ane, a thresher t'other,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowt in fother.

I rule them, as I ought, discreetly,
And often labour them completely,
And aye on Sundays duly nightly,
I on the questions tairge them tightly,
'Till, faith; wee Davoc's grown so gleg,
(Tho' scarcely langer than my leg)
He'll screed you aff *effectual calling*,
As fast as ony in the dwalling.

I've nane in female servant station,
Lord keep me aye frae a' temptation!
I hae nae wife, and that my bliss is,
And ye hae laid nae tax on misses;
For weans I'm mair than weel contented,
Heaven sent me ane mair than I wanted:
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares the daddie in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace.
But her, my bonny, sweet, wee lady,
I've said enough for her already,
And if ye tax her or her mither,
By the L—d ye'se yet them a' thegither!

And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,
Nae kind of license out I'm taking,
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle,
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;
I've sturdy stumps, the Lord be thankit!
And a' my gates on foot I'll shank it.

This list wi' my ain hand I've wrote it,
The day and date as under notet;
Then know all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic.

ROBERT BURNS.

SONG.

Nae dames, tho' e'er sae fair;
Shall ever be my muse's care;
Their titles a' are empty show;
Gie me my highland lassie, O.

Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plain sae rushy, O
I set me down, wi' right good will,
To sing my highland lassie, O.

O were yon hills and valleys mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine!
The world then the love should know
I bear my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

But fickle fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea:
But while the crimson currents flow,
I'll love my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

Altho' thro' foreign climes I range,
I know her heart will never change,
For her bosom burns with honour's glow
My faithful highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

For her I'll dare the billow's roar,
For her I'll trace a distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw,
Around my highland lassie, O
Within the glen, &c.

She has my heart, she has my hand,
By sacred truth and honour's band!
'Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I'm thine my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

Farewell the glen sae bushy, O
Farewell the plain sae rushy, O
To other lands I now must go
To sing my highland lassie, O.

IMPROMPTU,

ON MRS. ———'S BIRTH DAY.

4th November, 1793.

Old Winter with his frosty beard,
Thus once to Jove his prayer preferr'd;
"What have I done of all the year,
To bear this hated doom severe?
My cheerless sons no pleasure know;
Night's horrid car drags, dreary, slow:
My dismal months no joys are crowning,
But spleeny English hanging, drowning.

Now, Jove, for once be mighty civil;
To counterbalance all this evil;
Give me, and I've no more to say,
Give me Maria's natal day!
That brilliant gift will so enrich me,
Spring, Summer, Autumn cannot match me:"
"'Tis done!" says Jove; so ends my story,
And Winter once rejoiced in glory.

ADDRESS TO A LADY.

Oh wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yondea lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee:
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,

The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign;
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

TO A YOUNG LADY,

MISS JESSY L———, OF DUMFRIES;

WITH BOOKS WHICH THE BARD PRESENTED HER.

THINE be the volumes, Jessy fair,
And with them take the poet's prayer;
That fate may in her fairest page,
With every kindliest, best presage
Of future bliss, enrol thy name:
With native worth, and spotless fame,
And wakeful caution, still aware
Of ill—but chief, man's felon snare;
And blameless joys on earth we find,
And all the treasures of the mind—
These be thy guardian and reward;
So prays thy faithful friend, *the bard.*

SONNET,

WRITTEN ON THE 25TH JANUARY 1793, THE BIRTH-DAY OF THE AUTHOR, ON HEARING A THRUSH SING IN A MORNING WALK.

SING on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on sweet bird, I listen to thy strain,
See aged Winter 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blythe carol clears his furrowed brow.

So in lone poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek content with light unanxious heart,
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys,
What wealth could never give nor take away!

Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

EXTEMPORE,

TO MR. S—E,

ON REFUSING TO DINE WITH HIM, AFTER HAVING BEEN PROMISED THE FIRST OF COMPANY, AND THE FIRST OF COOKERY, 17TH DEC., 1795.

No more of your guests, be they titled or not,
And cookery the first in the nation:
Who is proof to thy personal converse and wit,
Is proof to all other temptation.

To Mr. S—E,

WITH A PRESENT OF A DOZEN OF PORTER.

O had the malt thy strength of mind,
Or hops the flavour of thy wit;
'Twere drink for first of human kind,
A gift that e'en for S—e were fit.

Jerusalem Tavern, Dumfries.

THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

TUNE—"Push about the Jorum."

April, 1795.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, sir,
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!
"Fal de rall, &c.

O let us not, like snarling tykes,
In wrangling be divided;
'Till slap come in an unco loon
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted.
"Fal de rall, &c.

The kettle o' the kirk and state,
Perhaps a clout may fail in't;
But deil a foreign tinkler loon
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it;
By heaven the sacrilegious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it.
"Fal de rall, &c.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
And the wretch his true-born brother,
Who would set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,
May they be damned together!
Who will not sing "God save the king,"
Shall hang as high's the steeple;
But, while we sing "God save the king,"
We'll ne'er forget the people.

POEM,

ADDRESSED TO MR. MITCHELL, COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES, 179 .

Friend of the poet, tried and leal,
Wha, wanting thee, might beg or steal;

Alake, alake, the meikle deil,
Wi' a' his witches
Are at it, skelphin' ! jig and reel,
In my poor pouches.

I, modestly, fu' fain wad hint it,
That one pound one, I sairly want it;
If wi' the hizzie down ye send it,
It would be kind;
And while my heart wi' life-blood dunted
I'd bear't in mind.

So may the auld year gang out moaning
To see the new come laden, groaning,
Wi' double plenty o'er the loanin
To thee and thine;
Domestic peace and comforts crowning
The hail design.

POSTSCRIPT.

Ye've heard this while how I've been licket,
And by fell death was nearly nicket:
Grim loon ! he gat me by the fecket,
And sair me sheuk;
But, by guid luck, I lap a wicket,
And turn'd a neuk.

But by that health, I've got a share o't,
And by that life I'm promised mair o't,
My hale and weel I'll tak a' care o't
A tentier way:
Then farewell folly, hide and hair o't,
For ance and aye.

SENT TO A GENTLEMAN WHOM HE HAD OFFENDED.

THE friend whom wild from wisdom's way,
The fumes of wine infuriate send;
(Not moony madness more astray)
Who but deplores that hapless friend?

Wine was th' insensate frenzied part,
Ah why should I such scenes outlive !
Scenes so abhorrent to my heart !
'Tis thine to pity and forgive.

POEM ON LIFE,

ADDRESSED TO COLONEL DE PEYSTER, DUMFRIES, 1796.

MY honoured colonel, deep I feel
Your interest in the poet's weel;
Ah ! how sma' heart hae I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus pill,
And potion glasses.

O what a canty world were it,
Would pain and care, and sickness spare it:

And fortune, favour, worth, and merit,
As they deserve;
(And aye a rowth, roast beef and claret;
Syne wha would starve?)
Dame life, tho' fiction out may trick her,
And in paste gems and frippery deck her;
Oh! flickering, feeble, and unsicker
I've found her still,
Aye wavering like the willow wicker,
'Tween good and ill.

Then that curst carmagnole, auld Satan,
Watches like baudrons by a rattan,
Our sinfu' saul to get a claut on
Wi' felon ire;
Syne, whip! his tail ye'll ne'er cast saut on,
He's aff like fire.

Ah Nick! ah Nick, it is na fair,
First showing us the tempting ware,
Bright wines and bonnie lasses rare,
To put us daft;
Syne weave unseen thy spider's snare
O hell's damn'd waft.

Poor man, the flie, aft bizzes by,
And aft as chance he comes thee nigh,
Thy auld damn'd elbow yeuks wi' joy,
And hellish pleasure;
Already in thy fancy's eye,
Thy sicker treasure.

Soon heels o'er gowdie! in he gangs,
And like a sheep-head on a tangs,
Thy girning laugh enjoys his pangs
And murdering wrestle,
As dangling in the wind he hangs
A gibbet's tassel.

But lest you think I am uncivil,
To plague you with this draunting drivel,
Abjuring a' intentions evil,
I squat my pen;
The Lord preserve us frae the devil!
Amen! amen!

ADDRESS TO THE TOOTH-ACHE.

My curse upon your venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gums alang;
And thro' my lugs gies mony a twang,
Wi' gnawing vengeance;
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!

When fevers burn, or ague freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or cholic squeezes;
Our neighbour's sympathy may ease us
Wi' pitying moan;

But thee—thou hell o' a' diseases,
Aye mocks our groan!

Adown my beard the slavers trickle;
I throw the wee stools o'er the meikle,
As round the fire the giglets keckle,
To see me loup;
While raving mad, I wish a heckle
Were in their doup.

O' a' the num'rous human dools,
Ill har'sts, daft bargains, *cutty stools*,
Or worthy friends raked i' the mools,
Sad sight to see!
The tricks o' knaves or fash o' fools,
Thou bear'st the gree.

Where'er that place be, priests ca' hell,
Whence a' the tones o' mis'ry yell,
And ranked plagues their numbers tell,
In dreadfu' raw,
Thou, TOOTH-ACHE, surely bear'st the bell,
Amang them a'!

O thou grim mischief making chiel,
That gars the notes o' discord squeel,
'Till daft mankind aft dance a reel
In gore a shoe-thick;—
Gie a' the faes o' SCROLAND'S weel
A towmond's Tooth-Ache.

SONG.

TUNE.—Morag.

O WHA is she that lo'es me,
And has my heart a-keeping?
O sweet is she that lo'es me,
As dews o' summer weeping,
In tears the rose-buds steeping.

CHORUS.

O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer;
O that's the queen o' womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

If thou shalt meet a lassie,
In grace and beauty charming,
That e'en thy chosen lassie,
Ere while thy breast sae warming
Had ne'er sic powers alarming.
O that's, &c.

If thou hadst heard her talking,
And thy attentions plighted,
That ilka body talking,
But her by thee is slighted:
And thou art all delighted.
O that's &c.

If thou hast met this fair one;
When frae her thou hast parted,
If every other fair one,
But her thou hast deserted,
And thou art broken hearted—
O that's &c.

SONG.

Jockie's ta'en the parting kiss,
O'er the mountain he is gane;
And with him is a' my bliss,
Nought but griefs with me remain.

Spare my luve, ye winds that blaw,
Plashy sleets and beating rain,
Spare my luve, thou feathery snaw,
Drifting o'er the frozen plain.

When the shades of evening creep
O'er the day's fair, gladsome e'e,
Sound and safely may he sleep,
Sweetly blythe his waukening be!

He will think on her he loves,
Fondly he'll repeat her name;
For where'er he distant roves,
Jockey's heart is still at hame.

SONG.

My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form
The frost of Hermit age might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind:
I love my Peggy's angel air,
Her face so truly, heavenly fair,
Her native grace so void of art,
But I adore my Peggy's heart.

The lily's hue, the rose's dye,
The kindling lustre of an eye;
Who but owns their magic sway,
Who but knows they all decay!
The tender thrill, the pitying tear,
The generous purpose, nobly dear,
The gentle look, that rage disarms
These are all immortal charms.

WRITTEN IN A WRAPPER,

INCLOSING A LETTER TO CAPTAIN GROSE, TO BE LEFT WITH MR. CARDONNEL, ANTIQUARIAN.

Tune.—"Sir John Malcolm."

Ken ye ought o' Captain Grose?
Igo, and ago,
If he's amang his friends or foes?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he South, or is he North?
Igo, and ago,
Or drowned in the river Forth?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he slain by Highland bodies?
Igo, and ago,
And eaten like a wether-haggis?
Iram, coram, dago,

Is he to Abram's bosom gane
Igo, and ago
Or haudin' Sarah by the wame?
Iram, coram, dago.

Where'er he be, the Lord be near him;
Igo, and ago,
As for the deil he daur na steer him,
Iram, coram, dago.

But please transmit th' inclosed letter,
Igo, and ago,
Which will oblige your humble debtor
Iram, coram, dago.

So may you have auld stanes in store,
Igo, and ago,
The very stanes that Adam bore,
Iram, coram, dago.

So may ye get in glad possession,
Igo, and ago,
The coins o' Satan's coronation!
Iram, coram, dago.

TO

ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq. OF FINTRY.

ON RECEIVING A FAVOUR.

I CALL no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled Muse may suit a bard that feigns;
Friend of my life! my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The gift still dearer as the giver you.

Thou orb of day! thou other paler light!
And all ye many sparkling stars of night;
If aught that giver from my mind efface;
If I that giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
Then roll to me, along your wandering spheres,
Only to number out a villain's year!

EPITAPH ON A FRIEND.

AN honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest,
The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:

Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.

A GRACE BEFORE DINNER.

O Thou, who kindly dost provide
For ev'ry creature's want!
We bless thee, God of nature wide,
For all thy goodness lent;
And if it please the heavenly guide,
May never worse be sent;
But whether granted, or denied,
Lord bless us with content!
Amen!

TO MY DEAR AND MUCH RESPECTED FRIEND, Mrs. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

ON SENSIBILITY.

Sensibility how charming,
Thou, my friend, canst truly tell;
But distress, with horrors arming,
Thou hast also known too well;

Fairest flower, behold the lily,
Blooming in the sunny ray;
Let the blast sweep o'er the valley,
See it prostrate on the clay.

Hear the wood-lark charm the forest,
Telling o'er his little joys:
Hapless bird! a prey the surest,
To each pirate of the skies.

Dearly bought the hidden treasure,
Finer feelings can bestow:
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.

A VERSE,

COMPOSED AND REPEATED BY BURNS, TO THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, ON TAKING LEAVE AT A PLACE IN THE HIGHLANDS WHERE HE HAD BEEN HOSPITABLY ENTERTAINED.

When death's dark stream I ferry o'er;
A time that surely shall come;
In heaven itself, I ask no more,
Than just a Highland welcome.

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH

MR. GEORGE THOMSON.

CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

No. I.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

SIR, *Edinburgh, Sept.* 1792.

FOR some years past, I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel the most agreeable composor living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one that is conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach, would be an easy task to the author of *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.—We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly then whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs, suited to the particular melodies, which I am prepared to send you. A few songs exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these or make new songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you that, I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old songs; those only will be removed that appear quite silly, or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr. Burns, and if *he* is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music in such cases, no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter accompanying this, to be forgiven for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

No. II.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

SIR, *Dumfries*, 16 *September*, 1792.

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak the hindmost" is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me. You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers, to approve, or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos, if you are for *English* verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. *Tweedside; Ah! the poor Shepherd's mournful fate; Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit*, &c. you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as *To Fanny fair, could I impart*, &c. usually set to *The Mill Mill O*, is a disgrace to the collection in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself, at least, think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright *prostitution of soul!* A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, "Guid speed the wark!"

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P. S. I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

No. III.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh*, 13*th October*, 1792.

I RECEIVED, with much satisfaction, your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention, in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking *English* verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year, more and more, the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air *My Nannie O*, which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, *While some for pleasure pawn their health*, answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, *O Nancy wilt thou go with me*, that, one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses: you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it, and, moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however, gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy, which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits: simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting indeed in all songs than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection; and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.

I remain, dear Sir.

No. IV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

My Dear Sir,

Let me tell you, that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have *all but one* the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance, on reading over *The Lea Rig*, I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough.

When o'er the hill the eastern star,
Tells bughtin-time is near, my jo;

And owsen frae the furrow'd field,
Return sae dowf and weary O;
Down by the burn, where scented birks
Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo,
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O.

In mirkest glen at midnight hour,
I'd rove and ne'er be eerie O,
If through that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie O,
Although the night were ne'er so wild,
And I were ne'er sae wearie O,
I'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O.

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ballad to the air *Nannie O*, is just. It is, besides, perhaps the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, that in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay, peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honour, for this reason alone, I am of opinion (but as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject, as you please) that my ballad of *Nannie O* might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my *Nannie O*, the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl, free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay; so, with my best compliments to honest Allan, Good be wi' ye, &c.

Friday Night.

* * * *

Saturday Morning.

As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you *Nannie O* at length.

Your remarks on *Ewe bughts, Marion*, are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merit of *Ewe bughts*; but it will fill up the page. You must know, that all my earliest love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might

have been easy in after times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their *race*.

Will ye go to the Indies my Mary,
And leave old Scotia's shore?
Will you go to Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orang
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies,
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true.

And sae may the Heavens forget, me,
When I forget my vow.

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily white hand:
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join,
And curst be the cause that shall part us;
The hour and the moment o' time.*

Galla Water and *Auld Bob Morris*, I think, will most probably by the next subject of my musings. However, even on *my verses*, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniatrete*, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work.

No. V.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

November 8th, 1792.

If you mean, my dear sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I should call the *feature notes*, of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, *My wife's a wanton wee thing*, if a few lines, smooth and pretty, can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were made extempore to it; and though on further study, I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer,
And neist my heart I'll wear, her,
For fear my jewel tine.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine,

The warld's wrack we share o't,
The wrastle and the care o't
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
And think my lot divine.

. . . . . .

I have been looking over the *Collier's bonny Dochter*, and if the following raphsody, which I composed the other day, on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss ——, as she passed through this place to England, will suit your taste better than the *Collier Lassie*, fall on and welcome.

*This song Mr. Thomson has not adopted in his collection. It deserves, however, to be preserved.

O saw ye bonnie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither.

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee;
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore, thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

The powers aboon will tent thee;
Misfortune sha'na steer thee;
Thou'rt like themselves sae lovely,
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonnie.

* * * * *

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into your hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. Farewell, &c.

No. VI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

TUNE.—"Katherine Ogie."

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom;
As underneath her fragrant shade,
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore our selves asunder;
But Oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kissed sae fondly;
And closed for aye, the sparkling glance,
That dwelt on me sae kindly!

And mouldering now in silent dust
The heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core,
Shall live my Highland Mary.

* * * * *

MY DEAR SIR, *14th November*, 1792.

I AGREE with you, that the song, *Katherine Ogie*, is very poor stuff, and unworthy—altogether unworthy—of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward word *Ogie*, recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air, which should insure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of *Auld Rob Morris*. I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you please of the productions. Adieu, &c.

No. VII.

MR. THOMSON TO MR. BURNS.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, Nov. 7.* 1792.

I WAS just going to write to you, that on meeting with your *Nannie*, I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the *Lea-Rig* is so short; the air is easy, sung soon, and very pleasing; so that if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost, ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very Flowers of English Song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you must observe, my plan is, that every air shall, in the first place, have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs, for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the *Ewe-bughts* is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect *all* the songs to be of superlative merit; that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on *Bonnie Leslie:* it is a thousand times better than the *Collier's Lassie:* "The deil he couldna scaith thee," &c. is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander, sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration in the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonia, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song, *My wife's a winsome wee thing,* I think the first eight lines are very good; but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are bare repetitions of the first verses. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following; do you mend it, or as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way.

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blythesome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' warld's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't,
Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

. . . . . .

You perceive, my dear sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me by speaking freely what I think. Be assured, it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem, or picture I see; my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the re-perusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.

I remain yours, faithfully, &c.

P. S. Your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand; they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel supperadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. VIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st December, 1792.

Your alterations of my *Nannie O* are perfectly right. So are those of "My wife's a wanton wee thing." Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear sir, with the freedom which characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter "Bonnie Leslie." You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

"For nature made her what she is,
And never made anither," (such a person as she is.)

This is in my opinion more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither." However, it is immaterial: Make it either way.* "Caledonie," I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, though it is santioned in three or four instances by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The "Lea-rig" is as follows. (Where the poet gives the two first stanzas as before, p. 268, with the following in addition.)

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;
At noon the fisher seeks the glen,
Along the burn to steer my jo;
Gie me the hour o' gloamin grey,
It mak's my heart sae cherry O,
To meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.

I am interrupted. Yours, &c.

No. IX.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

THERE'S auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king o' guid fellows, and wale o' auld men;
He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine,
And ae bonnie lassie, his darling and mine.

She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
She's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as the lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

But Oh; she's an heiress, and Robin's a laird,
And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard;
A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed,
The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead.

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane;
The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane;
I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist,
And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

O had she but been of a lower degree,
I then might hae hoped she wad smiled upon me!
O, how past describing had then been my bliss,
As now my distraction no words can express!

. . . . . .

DUNCAY GRAY.

DUNCAN GRAY cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
On blythe yule night when we were fu',
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

* Mr. Thomsom has decided "Ne'er made sic anither."

Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd;
Ha, ha, &c.
Meg was deaf as Ailsa craig,
Ha, ha, &c.
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn,
Ha, ha, &c.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, &c.
Slighted love is sair to bide,
Ha, ha, &c.
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die?
She may gae to—France for me!
Ha, ha, &c.

How it comes let doctors tell,
Ha, ha, &c.
Meg grew sick as he grew heal,
Ha, ha, &c.
Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings,
And Oh, her e'en they spak sic things!
Ha, ha, &c.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
Ha, ha, &c.
Maggie's was a piteous case,
Ha, ha, &c.
Duncan could na be her death,
Swelling pity smoored his wrath;
Now they're crouse and canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

4th December, 1792.

THE foregoing I submit, my dear sir, to your better judgment. Acquit them or condemn them as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

No. X.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

SONG.

TUNE—"I had a horse."

O POORTITH cauld and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
An' 'twere na' for my Jeanie.

O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love,
Depend on fortune's shining?

This warld's wealth when I think on,
It's pride and a' the lave o't;
Fie, fie, on silly coward man,
That he should be the slave o't.
O why, &c.

Her een sae bonnie blue betray,
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword aye,
She talks of rank and fashion.
O why &c.

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?
O why, &c.

How blest the humble cotter's fate!
He wooes his simple dearie,
The silly bogles wealth and state,
Can never make them eerie.

O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune's shining?

* * * * * * * * *

GALLA WATER.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braes, nor Ettrick shaws,
Can match the lads o' Galla water.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I loe him better
And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
The bonnie lad o' Galla Water.

Altho' his daddie was nae laird,
And tho' I hae nae meikle tocher;
Yet rich in kindness, truest love,
We'll tent our flocks by Galla Water.

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace, or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O that's the chiefest warld's treasure.

January, 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear sir. How comes on your publication? will these two foregoing be of any service to you? I should like to know what songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know, it is my trade; and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints, that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

No. XI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, January 20th, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them, and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured me, for *Auld Rob Morris, Duncan Gray, Galla Water*, and *Cauld Kail*, are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will endear him to every body.

The distracted lover in *Auld Rob*, and the happy shepherdess in *Galla Water*, exhibit an excellent contrast; they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was very limited, but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing; leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings; the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay on the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events or by the peerless charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than anybody, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary, a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say, it has been solely managed by me, and we had several conversations about it, when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind, will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c. of Pleydell. To those of the comic or humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing, or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do, *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed upon any thing of the kind. But for this last class of airs, I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties, about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air, are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called, *The Lass of Lochroyan*, which I do not admire. I have set down the air therefore as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

. . . . . .

POSTSCRIPT.

FROM THE Hon. A. ERSKINE.

Mr. THOMSON has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. Highland Mary is most enchantingly pathetic, and Duncan Gray possesses native genuine humour; "spak o' lowpin o'er a linn," is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend C. who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous; I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble; and I certainly shall not betray your confidence.

I am, your hearty admirer,
ANDREW ERSKINE.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

26th January, 1793.

I APPROVE greatly, my dear sir, of your plans. Dr. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c. of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast, that in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which every song took its rise, "Lochaber," and the "Braes of Ballenden," excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air, or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scotch muse.

I do not doubt but you might make a very valuable collection of Jacobite songs—but would it give no offence? In the mean time, do not you think that some of them, particularly "The Sow's tail to Geordie," as an air, with other words, might be well worth a place in your collection of lively songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and that the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a *naivete*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste,) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar, is an acquisition to your work. His "Gregory" is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has I think more of the ballad simplicity in it.

* * * * *

LORD GREGORY.

O MIRK, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempests roar;
A waeful wanderer seeks thy tower
Lord Gregory ope thy door.

An exile frae her father's ha',
And a' for loving thee;
At least some pity on me shaw,
If love it may na be.

Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove
By bonnie Irwine side,
Where first I own'd that virgin love
I lang, lang had denied.

How aften didst thou pledge and vow,
Thou wad for aye be mine;
And my fond heart, itsel sae true,
It ne'er mistrusted thine.

Hard is thy heart, Lord Gregory,
And flinty is thy breast;
Thou dart of heav'n that flashest by,
O wilt thou give me rest!

Ye mustering thunders from above
Your willing victim see!
But spare and pardon my fause love,
His wrangs to heaven and me!*

My most respectable compliments to the honourable gentleman who favoured me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and his MSS. soon.

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*The song of Dr. Walcott on the same subject is as follow:

Ah ope, Lord Gregory thy door,
A midnight wanderer sighs;
Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
And lightnings cleave the skies.

Who comes with woe at this drear night—
A pilgrim of the gloom,
If she whose love did once delight,
My cot shall yield her room,

Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
That once was priz'd by thee:
Think of the ring by yonder burn
Thou gav'st to love and me.

But should'st thou not poor Marian know,
I'll turn my feet and part;
And think the storms that round me blow,
Far kinder than thy heart.

It is but doing justice to Dr Walcott to mention, that his song is original. Mr. Burns saw it, liked it, and immediately wrote the other on the same subject, which is derived from an old Scottish ballad of uncertain origin.

NO. XIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.

TUNE—"Bide ye yet."

O MARY, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour;
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor;
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen when to the trembling string,
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat but neither heard nor saw;
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw
And you the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said, amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die!
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only fault is loving thee.
If love for love thou wilt nae gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

* * * * * *

MY DEAR SIR,

THE song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits, or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly: and I will not, cannot bear rivalship from you, or any body else.

No. XIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

March, 1793.

WANDERING WILLIE.

HERE awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame,
Come to my bosom my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting!
It was nae the blast brought the tear in my e'e!
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Ye hurricanes rest in the cave o' your slumbers,
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms:
Awaken ye breezes, row gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But if he's forgotten his faithfulest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide roaring main:
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain.

* * * * *

I leave it to you, my dear sir, to determine whether the above, or the old "Through the lang Muir" be the best.

No. XV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME OH

WITH ALTERATIONS.

Oh open the door, some pity to show,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh.
Tho' thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh.

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But caulder thy love for me, Oh:
The frost that freezes the life at my heart,
Is nought to my pains frae thee, Oh.

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, Oh:
False friends, false love, farewell! for ever mair
I'll ne'er trouble them nor thee, Oh.

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide,
She sees his pale corse on the plain, Oh:
My true love, she cried, and sank down by his side,
Never to rise again, Oh.

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

No. XVI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

JESSIE.

TUNE—"*Bonny Dundee.*"

True hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr,
But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair;
To equal young Jessie seek Scotland all over;
To equal young Jessie you seek it in vain,

Grace, beauty and elegance fetter her lover,
And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

O fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily at evening close;
But in the fair presence o' lovely young Jessie,
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose,
Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring;
Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law:
And still to her charms she alone is a stranger,
Her modest demeanor's the jewel of a'.

No. XVII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 2d April, 1793.

I WILL not recognise the title you give yourself, "the prince of *indolent* correspondents;" but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would then fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs; these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs, which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon every thing else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verse, by way of desert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments: they are indeed beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your Lord Gregory, in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is! Your *Here Awa Willie* must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over: he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.*

* WANDERING WILLIE.

AS ALTERED BY MR. ERSKINE AND MR. THOMSON.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter-winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e;
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, so Willie to me.

Rest ye wild storms in the cave o' your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Blow soft ye breezes! roll gently ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But oh, if he's faithless and minds nae his Nannie,
Flow still between us, thou dark heaving main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While, dying, I think that my Willie's my ain.

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal.

No. XVIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

WHEN WILD WAR'S DEADLY BLAST WAS BLAWN.

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning,
I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor and honest sodger.

A leal, light heart was in my breast,
My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy:

At length I reach'd the bonnie glen,
Where early life I sported:
I pass'd the mill and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

Our poet, with his usual judgment, adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others. The last edition is as follows:—

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame:
Come to my bosom my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting;
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Waken ye breezes, row gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us thou wide-roaring main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain.

Several of the alterations seem to be of little importance in themselves, and were adopted, it may be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words better to the music.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I, sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be,
That's dearest to thy bosom;
My purse is light, I've far to gang,
And fain wad be thy lodger;
Iv'e serv'd my king and country lang,
Take pity on a sodger.

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me,
And lovelier was than ever:
Quo' she, a sodger ance I lo'ed:
Forget him shall I never:
Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
Ye freely shall partake it,
That gallant badge, the dear cockade
Ye're welcome for the sake o't!

She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like ony lily;
She sank within my arms, and, cried,
Art thou my ain dear Willie?
By Him who made yon sun and sky—
By whom true love's regarded,
I am the man; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded.

The wars are o'er, and I'm come hame,
And find thee still true hearted;
Tho' poor in gear, we're rich in love,
And mair we'se ne'er be parted.
Quo' she, my grandsire left me gowd,
A mailin plenish'd fairly;
And come, my faithful sodger lad,
Thou'rt welcome to it dearly!

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honour;
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger;
Remember he's his country's stay
In day and hour of danger.

MEG O' THE MILL.

AIR—"O Bonnie Lass will you lie in a Barrack!"

O KEN ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten,
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She has gotten a coof wi' a claut o' siller,
And broken the heart o' the barley Miller.

The Miller was strappin', the Miller was ruddy;
A heart like a lord and a hue like a lady;
The Laird was a widdiefu', bleerit knurl;
She's left the guid fellow and ta'en the churl.

The Miller he hecht her, a heart leal and loving;
The Laird did address her wi' matter mair moving:
A fine pacing horse wi' a clear chained bridle,
A whip by her side, and a bonnie side-saddle.

O wae on the siller, it is sae prevailing;
And wae on the love that's fix'd on a mailin!
A tocher's nae word in a true lover's parle,
But, gie me my love, and a fig for the warl'.

No. XIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

THANK you my dear sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad making is now as completely my hobby-horse, as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race, (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning-post!) and then cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say, or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been," and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of *Coila** shall be "Good night and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words; now for a few present remarks as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of *The last time I came o'er the Moor*, and several other lines in it, are beautiful: but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to *make* or *mend*. *For ever, Fortune wilt thou prove*, is a charming song; but *Logan burn and Logan braes*, are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of *Logan Water*, (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty:

Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

My Patie is a lover gay, is unequal. "His mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony."

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, *Rigs of Barley*, to the same tune, does not altogether please me, but if I can mend it, and thresh a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. *The Lass o' Patie's Mill* is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it, which my much-valued friend, Mr. Erskine, will take into his critical consideration. In Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical volumes are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which

* Burns here calls himself the Voice of Coila, in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the Voice of Cona. Sae merry as we a' hae been, and Good night and joy be wi' you a', are the names of two Scottish tunes.

I had from the present Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can on such authorities believe.

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon Castle with the then Earl father to Earl John; and one forenoon, riding, or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irwine water, still called "Patie's Mill," where a bonnie lass was "tedding hay, bareheaded on the green." My Lord observed to Allan, that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

One day I heard Mary say, is a fine song; but for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Was there ever such banns published, as a purpose of marriage between *Adonis* and *Mary?* I agree with you that my song, *There's nought but care on every hand*, is much superior to *Poortith cauld*. The original song *The mill, mill O*, though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow, as an English set. *The Banks of the Dee* is, you know, literally *Langolee* in slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery to it, for instance,

"And sweetly the nightingale sung from the tree."

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen or heard on the Banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza equal to *The small birds rejoice*, &c. I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song.* *John Anderson my jo*—the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum, is my composition, and I think it not the worst: If it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs, is in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are *Tullochgorum, Lumps o' puddin, Tibbie Fowler*, and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation. There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called *Craigieburn Wood;* and in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of our sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthuiast about it; and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. *Shepherds I have lost my love*, is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, which I think . . . . . but in its original state is not quite a lady's song. I enclosed an altered, not amended copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.†

* It will be found in the course of this correspondence, that the Bard produced a second stanza of "The Chevalier's Lament," (to which he here alludes) worthy of the first.

† Mr. Thomson, it appears, did not approve of this song, even in its altered

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his *Lone vale* is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hits.

No. XX.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, April, 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year and "witch the world with your horsemanship."

I know there are a good many *lively* songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. *My Patie is a lover gay*, though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza.

No. XXI.

MR. BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

HAVE yours, my dear sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what fiddlers call a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

> "There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> That wander thro' the blooming heather,

You may alter to

> "Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> Ye wander," &c.

My song, *Here awa there awa*, as mended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.*

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is in my opinion reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either, in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity; now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with

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state. It does not appear in the correspondence; but is probably one to be found in his MSS. beginning,

> "Yestreen I got a pint of wine,
> A place where body saw na:
> Yestreen lay on this breast of mine,
> The gowden locks of Anna."

It is highly characteristic of our Bard, but the strain of sentiment does not correspond with the air, to which he proposes it should be allied.

* The reader has already seen that Burns did not finally adopt all Mr. Erskine's alterations.

an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with *The last time I came o'er the Moor.* Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house—by Heaven 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W's version is an improvement; but I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much; let him amend the song, as the Highlander mended his gun:—he gave it a new stock, and a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in *The Lass o' Patie's mill,* must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with *Corn Rigs are bonnie.*. Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,* you must leave with me yet awhile. I have vowed to have a song to that air on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, *Poortith cauld and restless Love.* At any rate, my other song, *Green grow the Rashes,* will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name; which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scotch songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit *Bonnie Dundee.* I send you also a ballad to the *Mill, mill O.*

The last time I came o'er the Moor, I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MSS. Scots airs by me which I have picked up, mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned *lugs* would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called *Jackie Hume's Lament?* I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I'll enclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum.* I send you likewise, to me a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce.*†

Adieu!

No. XXII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

TUNE—"The last time I came o'er the Moor."

FAREWELL thou stream that winding flows
Around Maria's dwelling!
Ah cruel mem'ry! spare the throes
Within my my bosom swelling:

* The song here mentioned is that given in No. XVIII. "O ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten." This song is surely Mr. Burns' own writing, though he does not generally praise his own songs so much.—NOTE BY MR. THOMSON.

† The air here mentioned is that for which he wrote the ballad of "Bonny Jean."

Condemn'd to drag a hopeless chain,
And still in secret languish;
To feel a fire in ev'ry vein,
Yet dare not speak my anguish.

The wretch of love, unseen, unknown,
I fain my crime would cover;
The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan
Betray the hopeless lover.
I know my doom must be despair,
Thou wilt, nor canst relieve me;
But oh, Maria, hear one prayer,
For pity's sake forgive me.

The music of thy tongue I heard,
Nor wist while it enslav'd me;
I saw thine eyes, yet nothing fear'd,
'Till fears no more had saved me.
The unwary sailor thus aghast,
The wheeling torrent viewing:
'Mid circling horrors yields at last
To overwhelming ruin.

. . . . . .

DEAR SIR,

I HAD scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of *The last time I came o'er the Moor*, and ere I slept I drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one *iota* of the original Scottish airs; I mean, in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but that on very eccentricity, perhaps depends a great part of their effect.

. . . . . .

No. XXIII.
MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 26th April, 1793.

I HEARTILY thank you, my dear sir, for your last two letters, and the song which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak your mind, is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs of Allan Ramsay's, for example, that I think silly enough, which another person more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but at present suf-

fice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad *When wild War's deadly blast*, &c. to the *Mill mill, O*, as well as the other two songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth line of the first verses must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music.* Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases, but that has nothing to do with the songs.

. . . . . .

P. S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your *Rigs o' Barley*. If the loose sentiments were *threshed* out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

No. XXIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMPSON.

June, 1793.

When I tell you, my dear sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much-loved friend, is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the *Mill mill O*. What you think a defect I esteem as a positive beauty: so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser, the hautboy player in Edinburgh—he is here instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this country. Among many of the airs that please me, there is one well known as a reel by the name of *The Quaker's Wife;* and which I remember a grand aunt of mine used to sing, by the name of *Liggeram cosh, my bonny wee lass.* Mr. Fraser plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I became such an enthusiast about it, that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin; and enclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's Museum. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

* The lines were the third and fourth.

"Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning."

As our poet had maintained a long silence, and the first number of Mr. Thomson's Musical Work was in the press, this gentleman ventured, by Mr. Erskine's advice, to substitute for them in that publication,

"And eyes again with pleasure beamed
That had been bleared with mourning."

Though better suited to the music, these lines are inferior to the original. This is the only alteration, adopted by Mr. Thomson, which Burns did not approve or at least assent to.

TUNE—"Liggeram cosh."

BLYTHE hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free,
As the breeze flew o'er me:
Now nae langer sport and play,
Mirth or sang can please me:
Lesley is sae fair and coy,
Care and anguish seize me.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring:
Trembling, I dow nocht but glowr,
Sighing, dumb, despairing!
If she winna ease the thaws,
In my bosom swelling;
Underneath the grass green sod,
Soon maun be my dwelling.

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.

No. XXV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

January, 5, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to day, I recollected the air of *Logan water;* and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer; and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow chair, ought to have some merit.

TUNE—"Logan water.

O, LOGAN sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride;
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the simmer sun.
But now the flowery banks appear
Like drumlie winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

Again the merry month o' May,
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers:
Blythe morning lifts his rosy eye,
And evening's tears are tears of joy;
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile;
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, men o' state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye mak mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
How can your flinty hearts enjoy,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry;
But soon may peace bring happy days
And Willie hame to Logan braes!

. . . . . .

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's Collection of Scots Songs?

"O gin my love were yon red rose
"That grows upon the castle wa',
"And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
"Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

"Oh! there beyond expression blest,
"I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
"Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
"Till fley'd away by Phœbus' light."

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke out a stanza to it, but in vain, after balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind legs of my elbow chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as evry poet who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my love yon lilach fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
And I a bird to shelter there
When wearied on my little wing.

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renew'd.

No. XXVI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Monday, 1st July, 1793.

I AM extremely sorry, my good sir, that any thing should happen

to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune, and when harmony will be restored, heaven knows.

The first book of songs, just published, will be despatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the *Quaker's Wife;* it is quite enchanting. Pray, will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentleman who originally agreed to join in the speculation having requested to be off. No matter; a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it, as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than what it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I should receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I shall be benefitted by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude, and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for by heaven, if you do, our correspondence is at an end; and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.

. . . . .

Wednesday morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song of Logan water: Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen, is admirable, but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

No. XXVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR, *July* 2, 1793.

I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' *wood-note wild*, is very fond of it; and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

. . . . . .

THERE was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen;
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonnie Jean.

And ave she wrought her mammie's wark,
And aye she sang sae merrilie;
The blythest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
And love will break the soundest rest.

Young Robie was the brawest lad,
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep, and kye,
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryst,
He danced wi' Jeanie on the down;
And land ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.

As in the bosom o' the stream,
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling pure, was tender love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean.*

And now she works her mammie's wark,
And aye she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be,
Or what wad mak her weel again.

But did na Jeanie's heart loup light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e,
As Robie tauld a tale o' love
Ae e'enin, on the lily lea?

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove;
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love.

O Jeanie fair, I lo'e thee dear;
O canst thou think to fancy me?
Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot,
And learn to tent the farms wi' me.

At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge,
Or naething else to trouble thee;
But stray amang the heather-bells,
And tent the waving corn wi' me.

Now what could artless Jeanie do?
She had na will to say him na:
At length she blushed a sweet consent,
And love was aye between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M. daughter to Mr. M. of D. one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

* In the original MS. our poet asks Mr. Thomson if this stanza is not original?

No. XXVIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS' INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you? BURNS' character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants, which the cold unfeeling ore can supply; at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold, in any musical work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written; only, your partiality to me has made you say too much; however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs in the list you sent me. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

The Flowers of the Forest is charming as a poem; and should be, and must be, set to the notes; but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas, beginning,

> "I hae seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,"

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburghshire. What a charming apostrophe is

> "O fickle fortune, why this cruel sporting,
> Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!"

The old ballad, *I wish I were where Helen lies*, is silly, to contemptibility. My alteration of it, in Johnson's, is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls, Ancient Ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough forgeries) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations—but no matter.

In my next, I will suggest to your consideration, a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the meantime, allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have *committed* your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS and DAUGHTERS of TASTE—all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say, with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor."

No. XXIX.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, August*, 1793.

I HAD the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy

to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

The bonnie brucket Lassie, certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen, Let me in this ae night,* and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse's leisure; these are peculiarly worthy of her choicest gifts; besides, you'll notice, that in the airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of *The bush aboon Traquair, Lord Gregory,* and the like; for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound, without the sense. Indeed, both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed: they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, *There was a lass and she was fair,* is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

NO XXX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR THOMPSON, *August,* 1793.

I HOLD the pen for our friend Clarke, who, at present, is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The *Georgium Sidus,* he thinks, is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

* * * * *

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

No. XXXI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

YOUR objection my dear sir, to the passages in my song *Logan Water,* is right in one instance; but it is difficult to mend it: If I can, I will. The other passage you object to does not appear in the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on *Robin Adair,* and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out of the way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

* * * * *

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

TUNE—"Robin Adair."

WHILE larks with little wing,
Fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
Forth I did fare;

Gay the sun's golden eye,
Peep'd o'er the mountains high;
Such thy morn! did I cry,
Phillis the fair.

In each bird's careless song,
Glad, I did share;
While yon wild flowers among,
Chance led me there;
Sweet to the opening day,
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;
Such thy bloom, did I say,
Phillis the fair.

Down in a shady walk,
Doves cooing were,
I mark'd the cruel hawk
Caught in a snare:
So kind may fortune be,
Such make his destiny!
He who would injure thee,
Phillis the fair.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all try my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*. If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favourite of mine: if not, I shall also be pleased; because I wish and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business.* Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

No. XXXII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

MY GOOD SIR, *August*, 1793.

I CONSIDER it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes; tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my stair-case, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit;* which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics; though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one, you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give *Robin Adair* a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out of the way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objec-

* The song sent herewith is that in p. 474.

tionable verses of *Down the burn Davie*, so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your *John Anderson my Jo*, which I am to have engraved, as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson, in great good humour, is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were *first acquent*. The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.

No. XXXIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT crinkum crankum tune, *Robin Adair*, has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend C.'s story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice, as follows.

. . . . . .

SONG.

HAD I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the wave's dashing roar:
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my last repose,
Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne'er to wake more.

Falsest of womankind, canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air!
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there:

. . . . . .

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander, in Breadalbane's fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs both to *Robin Adair* and *Gramachree*. They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness; so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them;—except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both.—A case in point—They have lately, in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called "*Caun du delish*." The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is "*Oran Gaoil*," and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic Parson, about these matters.

No. XXXIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMPSON.

MY DEAR SIR, *August*, 1793.

"Let me in this ae night," I will re-consider. I am glad you are pleased with my song, "Had I a cave," &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening, with a volume of the Museum in my hand; when turning up "Allan Water," "What numbers shall the muse repeat," &c, as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air: and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shadow of an old thorn, till I wrote out one to suit the measure. I may be wrong, but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay's Tea-table, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is "Allan Water," or, "My love Annie's very bonnie." This last has certainly been a line of the original song; so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied; though I likewise give you a "choosing line," that should not hit the cut of your fancy.

* * * * *

By Allan-stream I chanced to rove,
While Pœbus sank beyond Benleddi;*
The winds were whispering through the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready:
I listen'd to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony:
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang—
O dearly do I lo'e thee Annie.†

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking said, "I'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal impreast,
The sacred vow, we ne'er should sever.

The haunt o' spring's the primrose brae,
The simmer joys the flocks to follow;
How cheery, through her shortening day,
Is autumn in her weeds o' yellow;
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting her, our bosom's treasure.

Bravo! say I; it is a good song. Should you think so too, (not else) you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

* A mountain west of Strath-Allan, 3000 feet high.—R. B.
† Or, "O my love Annie's very bonnie."—R. B.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than in all the year else.

God bless you!

No. XXXV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Is *Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad*, one of your airs? I admire it much: and yesterday I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it to him. The set of the air which I had in my eye, is in Johnson's Museum.

* * * * *

O WHISTLE and I'll come to you, my lad,*
O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad;
Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad.

But warily tent when ye come to court me,
And come nae unless the back-yett be ajee;
Syne up the back style, and let nae body see,
And come as ye were nae comin' to me.
And come, &c.
O whistle, &c.

At kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,
Gang by me as tho' that ye cared nae a flie;
But steal me a blink o' your bonnie black e'e,
Yet look as ye were nae lookin' at me.
Yet look, &c.
O whistle, &c.

Aye vow and protest that ye care na for me,
And whiles ye may lightly my beauty a wee;
But court nae anither, tho' jokin ye be,
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.
For fear, &c.
O whistle, &c.

* * * * *

Another favourite air of mine, is, *The muckin o' Geordie's byre.* When sung slow, with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry; that I have endeavoured to supply as follows:—

ADOWN winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers as they spring:
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to sing.

* In some of the MSS. the first four lines run thus:

O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo,
O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo;
Tho' father and mother and a' should say no,
O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo.

CHORUS.

Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,
They never wi' her can compare.
Whaever has met wi' my Phillis,
Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
So artless, so simple, so wild;
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis,
For she is Simplicity's child.
Awa, &c.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,
Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest;
How fair and how pure is the lily,
But fairer and purer her breast.
Awa, &c.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,
They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie:
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
Its dew-drop o' diamond, her eye.
Awa, &c.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes thro' the green spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.
Awa, &c.

But beauty, how frail and how fleeting,
The bloom of a fine summer's day!
While worth in the mind o' my Phillis
Will flourish without a decay.*

Awa, &c.

. . . . . .

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss P. M. sister to *bonnie Jean*. They are both pupils of his. You shall hear from me, the very first grist I get from my rhyming mill.

No. XXXVI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT tune *Cauld Kail* is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin shot at the muses;† when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet, simple, inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step,"

* This song, certainly beautiful, would appear to more advantage without the chorus: as is indeed the case with several other songs of our author.

† Gloamin,—twilight, probably from glooming. A beautiful poetical word which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin-shot, a twilight interview.

and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has risen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least, makes me occasional visits; secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you in the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's Museum.

AIR.—"Cauld Kail."

COME let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder;
And I shall spurn, as vilest dust,
The warld's wealth and grandeur:
And do I hear my Jeanie own
That equal transports move her?
I ask for dearest life alone,
That I may live to love her.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure;
And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never.

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. *The last time I came o'er the Muir*, I cannot meddle with, as to mending it: and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

No. XXXVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

DAINTY DAVIE.

Now rósy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green spreading bowers;
And now comes in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie.

CHORUS.

Meet me on the warlock knowe
Dainty Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round us blaw,
A wandering wi' my Davie,
Meet me, &c.

When purple morning starts the hare
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie,
Meet me, &c.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,
I flee to his arms I lo'e best,
And that's my ain dear Davie.

CHORUS.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Bonnie Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.*

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N. B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is ——— nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

No. XXXVIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, 1st Sept.* 1793.

SINCE writing you last, I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of *Whistle and I'll come to you my lad*, will render it nearly as great a favourite as *Duncan Gray. Come let me take thee to my breast, Adown winding Nith*, and *By Allan stream*, &c. are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. *Had I a cave on some wild distant shore*, is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think it right to inclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her, no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little; they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

No. XXXIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you; the

* DAINTY DAVIE is the title of an old Scotch song, from which Burns has taken nothing but the title and the measure.

very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication, so get a verse from him now and then; though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste, are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint; however they may transport and ravish the ears of the connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly or insipid, I do not know whether the old air *Hey tuttie taittie* may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn.—This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of Liberty and Independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air that one might suppose to be the Royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.*

. . . . . .

BRUCE TO HIS TROOPS.

ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN.

To its own Tune.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots wham Bruce has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw?
Free-man stand, or Free-man fa'!
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

* This noble strain was conceived by our poet during a storm among the wilds of Glen-Ken, in Galloway. A more finished copy will be found afterwards.

. . . . . .

So may God ever defend the cause of Truth and Liberty, as he did that day!—Amen.

P. S.—I showed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the Museum; though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

No. XL.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I DARE say, my dear sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it, a ballad is my hobby-horse; which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless, idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pil-garlick, the bedlam jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of man.

Tho following song I have composed for *Oran-gaoil*, the Highland air that you tell me, in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song; so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well! if not, 'tis also well!

. . . . . .

TUNE—"Oran gaoil."

BEHOLD the hour, the boat arrive;
Thou goest, thou darling of my heart;
Sever'd from thee can I survive—
But fate has will'd, and we must part,
I'll often greet this surging swell,
Yon distant isle will often hail:
"E'en here, I took the last farewell;
"There latest mark'd her vanish'd sail."

Along the solitary shore,
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar,
I'll westward turn my wistful eye:
Happy, thou Indian grove, I'll say,
Where now my Nancy's path may be?
While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
O tell me, does she muse on me!

No. XLI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 5th Sept. 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me

verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it, entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as *Hey tuttie taittie.* Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person,—and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs, of which I lately sent you the list; and I think *Lewie Gordon* is most happily adapted to your ode; at least with a very short variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in *Lewie Gordon* more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of *Lewie Gordon*, which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry that characterise your verses. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows:

Verse 1*st*, Or to *glorious* victorie.
2*d*, *Chains*—chains and slaverie.
3*d*, Let him, *let him* turn and flie.
4*th*, Let him *bravely* follow me.
5*th*, But *they shall*, they shall be free.
6*th*, Let us, *let us* do, or die!

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is, "Welcome to your gory bed." Would not another word be preferable to *welcome?* In the next I expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. These little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for *Oran-gaoil* will insure celebrity to the air.

No. XLII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE recived your list, my dear sir, and here go my observations on it.*

Down the Burn Davie. I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:

* Mr. Thomson's list of songs for publication. In his remarks the bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance are presented to the reader.

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was aye the tale.

With "Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew!"
Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the burn,
And aye shall follow you."*

Thro' the wood, Laddie.—I am decidedly of opinion that both in this, and *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame*, the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

Cowden-knowes. Remember in your index that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning

"When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford: Robert was his Christian name.

Laddie lie near me, must *lie by me* for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing, (such as it is,) I never can compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me, that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my music beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

Gill Morice I am for leaving out. It is a plaguey length; the air itself is never sung: and its place can well be supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance, *Craigieburn-wood* and *Roy's Wife*. The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit, as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the hand writing of the lady who composed it; and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen:†

Highland laddie. The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old *Highland laddie*, which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called *Ginglan Johnnie;* it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, *I hae been at Crookie den*, &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the meantime, waiting for this di-

* This alteration Mr. Thomson has adopted, (or at least intended to adopt,) instead of the original song, which is objectionable in point of delicacy.

† This song, so much admired by our bard, will be found in the future part of the volume.

rection, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

Auld Sir Simon, I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place, *The Quaker's wife.*

Blythe hae I been o'er the hill is one of the finest songs ever I made in my life; and besides is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your works, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include *the bonnie lass in a' the warld* in your collection.

Daintie Davie I have heard sung, nineteen thousand, nine hundred and ninety nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit, as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

Fee him father—I inclose you Fraser's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact, he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas in that style; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirable pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which *Patie Allan's mither died, that was about the back o' midnight;* and by the leeside of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

. . . . . .

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever,
Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever.
Aften hast thou vow'd that death, Only should us sever,
Now thou's left thy lass for aye—I maun see thee never, Jamie,
I'll see thee never.*

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken.
Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken,
Thou canst love anither jo, While my heart is breaking:
Soon my weary e'en I'll close—Never mair to waken, Jamie,
Ne'er mair to waken.†

Jocky and Jenny I would discard, and in its place would put *There's nae luck about the house,* which has a very pleasant air; and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. *When she cam ben she bobbet,* as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the andante way, would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

"Saw ye my father," is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last, I wandered out and began a tender song: in what I think is its native style. I must premise that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers

* The Scottish (the Editor uses the word substantively, as the English) employ the abbreviation I'll, for I shall, as well as I will; and it is for I shall, it is used here. In Annandale, as in the northern counties of England, for I shall, they use I'se.

† This is the whole of the song. The bard never proceeded farther.—Note by Mr. Thomson,

call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—"Saw ye my father," &c.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.

FRAGMENT.

TUNE—"Saw ye my Father."

WHERE are the joys I hae met in the morning,
That danc'd to the larks early sang?
Where is the peace that awaited my wandering,
At e'enin' the wild woods amang?

Nae mair a-winding the course o' yon river,
And marking sweet flow'rets sae fair;
Nae mair I trace the light footsteps o' pleasure,
But sorrow and sad sighing care.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,
And grim surly winter is near?
No, no; the bees humming round the gay roses
Proclaim it the pride o' the year.

Fain would I hide, what I fear to discover,
Yet lang, lang too well hae I known;
A' that has caused the wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

. . . . . .

CETERA DESUNT.

"*Todlin' hame.*" Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine; that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him, at your concert, try it to a song of mine in the Museum, "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon."—One song more and I have done. "Auld lang syne." The air is but "mediocre," but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air.

AULD LANG SYNE.

SHOULD auld acquaintance be forget,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pou't the gowans fine;
But we've wandered many a weary foot
Sin auld lang syne.

For auld, &c.

We twa hae paidelt i' the burn,
Fra mornin' sun till dine:
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak' a right guid willie-waught,
For auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine!
And well tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*
For auld, &c.

. . . .

Now, I suppose I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. 'Gill Morice, Tranent Muir, M'Pherson's Farewell, Battle of Sheriffmuir,' or 'We ran and they ran, (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history,) Hardiknute, Barbara Allan,' (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared,) and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which 'The Cherry and the Slae' was sung; and which is mentioned as a well known air in Scotland's complaint, a book published before poor Mary's days. It was then called 'The banks o' Helicon;' an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's History of Scottish Music. The tune to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

No. XLIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I AM happy, my dear sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed," is, though a beautiful, hackneyed idea: so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:—

BANNOCK-BURN.

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled;
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victory.

Now's the day and now's the hour;
See the front of battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Edward! chains and slavery!

* This song of the olden times is excellent—It is worthy of our bard.

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor! coward! turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw!
Free-man stand, or free-man fa',
Caladonian! on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins.
But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do, or die!

. . . . . .

N.B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace.

"A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow."

A couplet worthy of Horace. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort; I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for the last night's jovality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen!

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

12*th Sept.* 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find yor ideas so much in unison with my own respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you made and to re-consider the whole with attention.

"Daintie Davie" must be sung two stanzas together, and then the chorus—'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of "Fee him, Father," when performed with feeling: but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly, and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humourous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with "Fee him, father," and with "Todlin hame" also, to the old words, which should be disunited from either of these airs. Some Bacchanalians I would wish to discard. "Fy let us a' to the bridal," for instance is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be

sung in a company of drunken colliers; and "Saw ye my father" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. Gory, presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them, "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

"Now prepare for honour's bed,
"Or for glorious victorie."

No. XLV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

"WHO will decide when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it: I think I have much improved it. Instead of "sodger! hero!" I will have "Caledonia! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it over and over; and to the world some way or other it shall go as it is. At the same time it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.*

* Mr. Thomson has very properly adopted this song (if it may be so called) as the bard presented it to him. He has attached to it the air of "Lewis Gordon," and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better; but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and may employ the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any such should in future arise. The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alteration proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances with great readiness; perhaps, indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In the present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged, with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who in preparing for an engagement attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death will probably have but imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men the conquerors of Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their spirits were without doubt wound up to the pitch of enthusiasm suited to the occasion; a pitch of enthusiasm at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment this heroic "welcome" may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of mortal exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported, by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrteus, to the war-song of General Wolfe. Mr. Thomson's observations, that "Welcome to your gory bed," is a discouraging address seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted, that the term gory is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful but a disagreeable image to the mind. But a great poet uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination.

I have finished my song to "Saw ye my father;" and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the *expression* of the air, it is true; but allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter: however, in that, I have no pretension to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with modest diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular; my advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses.

FAIR JENNY.

TUNE—"Saw ye my Father."

Where are the joys I hae met in the morning,
That danc'd to the lark's early sang!
Where is the peace that awaited my wandering,
At evening the wild woods among?

No more a-winding the course of yon river,
And marking sweet flow'rets so fair;
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,
But sorrow and sad-sighing care.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,
And grim surly winter is near?
No, no, the bees humming round the gay roses,
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

Fain would I hide what I fear to discover,
Yet long, long too well have I known:
All that has caused this wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,
Nor Hope dare a comfort bestow:
Come then, enamour'd and fond of my anguish,
Enjoyment I'll seek in my woe.

Adieu, my dear sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

No. XLVI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For *Muirland Willie* you have, in Ramsay's Tea-table, an excellent song beginning "Ah, those tears in Nelly's eyes?" As for "The Collier's Dochter," take the following old Bacchanal.

. . . . . .

DELUDED swain, the pleasure
The fickle fair can give thee,
Is but a fairy treasure,
Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.

The billows on the ocean,
The breezes idly roaming.
The cloud's uncertain motion,
They are but types of women.

O ! art thou not ashamed,
To doat upon a feature?
If man thou wouldest be named,
Despise the silly creature.

Go, find an honest fellow;
Good claret set before thee
Hold on till thou art mellow,
And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in Logan-water, I mend thus:

"How can your flinty hearts enjoy
"The widow's tear, the orphan's cry?"

The song, otherwise, will pass. As to *M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth*, you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the Museum, Vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins,

* "Raving winds around her blowing."

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the *Banks of Banna*, for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number: We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of *Roy's Wife*, for the music sake, we shall not insert it. *Deil tak' the wars;* is a charming song; so is *Saw ye my Peggy. There's nae luck about the house*, well deserves a place; I cannot say that *O'er the hills and far awa* strikes me as equal to your selection. *This is no my ain house* is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of *I hae laid a herring in sawt?* I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty; and there are many others of the same kind pretty—but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert *Fye let us a' to the bridal* to any other words than its own.

What pleases me, as simple and *naive*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, *Fye, gie me my coggie sirs—Fye let us a' to the bridal*, with several others of that cast, are to me, highly pleasing; while, *Saw ye my Mother*, delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus, my song, *Ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten?* pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but, "ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

No. XLVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

Your last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy

* This will be found in the latter part of this volume.

news. Alas, poor Erskine !* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has, till now, scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the *Quaker's Wife*, though, by the bye, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of *Leigher 'm choss*. The following verses I hope will please you, as an English song to the air.

THINE am I, my faithful fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy:
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
Ev'ry roving fancy

To thy bosom lay my heart,
There to throb and languish;
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
That would heal its anguish.

Take away these rosy lips,
Rich with balmy treasure:
Turn away thine eyes of love,
Lest I die with pleasure.

What is life when wanting love?
Night without a morning:
Love's the cloudless summer sun,
Nature gay adorning.

* * * * * *

Your objection to the English song I proposed for *John Anderson my jo*, is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

SONG,

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O CONDESCEND, dear, charming maid,
My wretched state to view;
A tender swain to love betray'd,
And sad despair, by you.

While here, all melancholy,
My passion I deplore,
Yet, urg'd by stern resistless fate,
I love thee more and more.

I heard of love, and with disdain,
The urchin's power denied;
I laugh'd at every lover's pain,
And mock'd them when they sigh'd:

But how my state is altered!
Those happy days are o'er;

* The Honourable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed.

For all thy unrelenting hate,
I love thee more and more.

O yield, illustrious beauty, yield,
No longer let me mourn;
And tho' victorious in the field,
Thy captive do not scorn.

Let generous pity warm thee,
My wonted peace restore;
And grateful, I shall bless thee still,
And love thee more and more.

* * * * * * *

The following address of Turnbull to the nightingale will suit, as an English song, to the air *There was a lass and she was fair.*—By the bye, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. which I can command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour; but I like some of his pieces very much.

* * * * * * *

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For tho' the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with Fashion's gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o'er the plain;
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

* * * * * * *

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to *Lewie Gordon.*

LAURA,

BY G. TURNBULL.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I choose
To indulge the smiling muse,
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat;
If beneath the moon's pale ray,
Thro' unfrequented wilds I stray:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod,
And to Fancy's wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise;
While with boundless joy I rove
Thro' the fairy land of love:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

* * * * * * *

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

MY DEAR SIR, *7th Nov.* 1793.

AFTER so long a silence, it gave me a peculiar pleasure to recognise your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to *Leiger m' choss*, which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit: and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer as English songs to the airs yet unprovided.

No. XLIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

December 1793.

TELL me how you like the following verses to the tune of *Jo Janet*.

HUSBAND, husband cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, sir;
Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, sir.

"One of two must still obey,
Nancy, Nancy,
Is it man or woman, say,
My spouse Nancy?"

If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience;
I'll desert my sovereign lord,
And so good bye allegiance!

"Sad will I be so bereft,
Nancy, Nancy:
Yet I'll try to make a shift,
My spouse Nancy."

My poor heart then break it must,
My last hour I'm near it:
When you lay me in the dust,
Think, think how you will bear it.

"I will hope and trust in heaven,
Nancy, Nancy;
Strength to bear it will be given,
My spouse Nancy."

Well, sir, from the silent dead,
Still I'll try to daunt you;
Ever round your midnight bed
Horrid sprites shall haunt you.

"I'll wed another like my dear,
Nancy, Nancy;
Then all hell will fly for fear,
My spouse, Nancy."

Air—"The Sutor's Dochter."

Wilt thou be my dearie:
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
Wilt thou let me cheer thee;
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'e's me!
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me;
Lassie let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

No L.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

My Dear Sir, *Edinburgh 7th April*, 1794.

Owing to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity 'till lately of perusing it. * How sorry am I to find Burns saying, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while *he* is delighting others from one end of the island to the

* A letter to Mr. Cunningham, to be found in p. 297.

other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case: Go, says the doctor, and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour. Alas! sir, replied the patient, I am that unhappy Carlini!

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserable weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by the good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it.—In subjects of the pastoral or humorous kind, he is perhaps unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is *sombre*, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the *Sutor's Dochter*, and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume; your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English to suit *Jo Janet* is inimitable. What think you of the air, *Within a mile of Edinburgh?* It has always struck me as a modern English imitation; but is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than "namby pamby." Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

No. LI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR, *May*, 1794.

I RETURN you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the *Burin*, is quite charmed with Allan's manner: I got him a peep of the *Gentle Shepherd*, and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, "I shall be quite in song," as you shall see by and bye. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls *The Banks of Cree*. Cree is a beautiful romantic stream; and as her ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it.

BANKS OF CREE.

HERE is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade;
The village-bell has told the hour,—
O what can stay my lovely maid.

'Tis not Maria's whispering call;
'Tis but the balmy breathing gale,

Mixt with some warbler's dying fall,
The dewy star of eve to hail.

It is Maria's voice I hear!
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little faithful mate to cheer;
At once 'tis music—and 'tis love.

And art thou come! and art thou true!
O welcome dear to love and me!
And let us all our vows renew,
Along the flowery banks of Cree.

No. LII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

July, 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of democratic discords. Alas, the day! And woe's me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions.* . . . . .

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham of Fintry. I wrote, on the blank side of a title-page, the following address to the young lady.

HERE, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers join'd,
Accept the gift, though humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of a grateful mind.

So may no ruffian† feeling in thy breast,
Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among;
But peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,
Or love ecstatic wake his seraph song.

Or pity's notes, in luxury of tears,
As modest want the tale of woe reveals;
While conscious virtue all the strain endears,
And heaven-born piety her sanction seals.

No. LIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh*, 10*th Aug.*, 1794.

I OWE an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say. I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but, nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry, and as the season approaches in which your muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

* A portion of this letter has been left out, for reasons that can easily be imagined.

† It were to have been wished that instead of RUFFIAN FEELING, the bard had used a less rugged epithet, e. g. RUDER,

No. LIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

30th August 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out and thinking of "O'er the hills and far awa," I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil like the vile manufactures of the spider, I leave, my dear sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first: but I own, that now, it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs; but, as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his lovelorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—"Sweet Annie frae the Sea beach came." Now for the song.

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad?
How can I the thoughts forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe?
Let me wander, let me rove,
Still my heart is with my love;
Nightly dreams and thoughts by day
Are with him that's far away.

CHORUS.

On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly thoughts and dreams by day
Are aye with him that's far away.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in this scorching sun
My sailor's thundering at his gun:
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate do with me what you may,
Spare but him that's far away!
On the seas, &c.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar,
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that's far away.
On the seas, &c.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end:

Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may heaven, with prosp'rous gales,
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey,
My dear lad that's far away,
On the seas, &c.

. . . . . .

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.

No. LV.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

My Dear Sir, *Edinburgh, 16th Sept.* 1794.

You have anticipated my opinion of "On the seas and far away:" I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly, "Bullets, spare my only joy." Confound the bullets. It might perhaps be objected to the third verse, "At the starless midnight hour," that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

No. LVI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

I shall withdraw my "On the seas and far away" altogether; it is unequal, and unworthy of the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son; you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world and try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, *abortions* and all; and as such, pray look over them and forgive them, and burn them.* I am flattered at your adopting "Ca' the yewes to the knowes," as it was owing to me that it ever saw the light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunzie, who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

* This Virgilian order of the poet, should, I think, be disobeyed with respect to the song in question, the second stanza excepted.—Note by Mr Thompson.
Doctors differ. The objection to the second stanza does not strike the Editor.

CHORUS.

Ca' the yewes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather grows,
Ca' them whare the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie.

Hark the mavis' evening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang†
Than a-faulding let us gang,
My bonnie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
Thro' the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves, that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.
Ca' the, &c.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers,
Fairies dance sae cheery.
Ca' the, &c.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
Thou'rt to love and heaven sae dear,
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
My bonnie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou hast stown my very heart;
I can die—but canna part,
My bonnie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs, my first scribbling fit.

No. LVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMPSON.

September, 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song, called *Onagh's Waterfall*? The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of hers shall have merit; still I think it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum, and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

† The river Clouden, a tributary stream to the Nith.

SHE SAYS SHE LO'ES ME BEST OF A'.

"Onagh's Water-Fall."

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
Bewitchingly o'er arching
Twa laughing een o' bonnie blue.
Her smiling sae wyling,
Wad make a wretch forget his woe;
What pleasure, what treasure,
Unto these rosy lips to grow;
Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,
When first her bonnie face I saw,
And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Like harmony her motion:
Her pretty ancle is a spy
Betraying fair proportion,
Wad make a saint forget the sky.
Sae warming, sae charming,
Her faultless form and graceful air;
Ilk feature—auld Nature
Declar'd that she could do na mair:
Hers are the willing chains o' love,
By conquering beauty's sovereign law;
And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Let others love the city,
And gaudy show at sunny noon;
Gie me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon.
Fair beaming and streaming,
Her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang.
There dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love,
And say thou lo'es me best of a'.

. . . . . .

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me the most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for "Rothiemurche's Rant," an air which put me in raptures; and in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here

I have Clark on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. "Rothiemurche," he says, "is in the air both original and beautiful;" and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.*

I have begun, anew, "Let me in this ae night." Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the "denouement" to be successful or otherwise;—should she "let him in" or not.

Did you not once propose "The Sow's tail to Geordie," as an air for your work; I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours, I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave, and to him I address the following:

TO DR. MAXWELL,

ON MISS JESSY STAIG'S RECOVERY.

MAXWELL, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessy from the grave!
An angel could not die!

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

No. LVIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose "wood-notes wild" are become as enchanting as ever. "She says she lo'es me best of a'," is one of the pleasantest table-songs I have seen; and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy, he can more powerfully proclaim your merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the *Sow's tail*, particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you ob-

* In the original follow here two stanzas of a song, beginning, "Lassie wi' the lint-white locks;" which will be found at full length afterwards.

serve, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your *Ca' the yewes*, is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you, whether you never seriously turned your thoughs upon dramatic writing. That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas; few or none of those which have appeared since the *Duenna*, possesses much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left with the London composer—Storace for Drury Lane, or Shield for Covent garden; both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on: so it may be with the namby pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.*

No. LIX.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 14th October, 1794.

The last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added, are enclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman. I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but it does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs, according to the eras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq. he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a-packing to make room for Peter's! Of you

* Our bard had before received the same advice, and certainly took it so far into consideration, as to have cast about for a subject.

he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two, for daring to dress up a little some old foolish songs for the Museum. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities: many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognise the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed: and as different persons sang the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste and discernment to choose the best they could hear, (which is far from certain,) still it must evidently be a chance, whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved; and, without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

No. LX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR FRIEND, 19*th October*, 1794.

BY this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two, so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, persuade you to adopt my favourite, "Craigie-burn wood," in your selection: It is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland: and, in fact, *(entre nous)* is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, a friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaiver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book—No! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary *in song;* to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the divine emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when first he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of

admiring a fine woman; in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of "When she cam ben she bobbet," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas.

SAW YE MY PHELY.

(QUASI DICAT PHILLIS.)

TUNE—"When she came ben she bobbet."

O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,
She winna come hame to her Willie.

What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
She lets thee to wit that she has thee forgot,
And for ever disowns thee her Willie.

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
As light as the air, and as fause as thou's fair,
Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willie.

. . . . . .

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. The "Posie" (in the Museum) is my composition: the air was taken down fron Mrs. Burns' voice.* It is well known in the West Country, but the old words are trash. By the bye, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's Lament" is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well beloved Allan Masterton. "Donnocht-head," is not mine: I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh Herald; and came to the Editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it.† "Whistle o'er the lave o't" is mine; the music said to be by

* The POSIE will be found afterwards. This and the other poems of which he speaks, had appeared in Johnson's Museum, and Mr. T. had inquired whether they were our bard's.

† The reader will be curious to see this poem so highly praised by BURNS. Here it is:—

KEEN blaws the wind o'er Donocht-head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaberlunzie tirls my sneck,
And shivering, tells his waefu' tale.
"Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his winding-sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters hae I seen,
And pip'd whar gor-cocks whirring flew;
And mony a day I've danc'd I ween,
To lifts which from my drone I blew."
My Eppie wak'd, and soon she cry'd,
Get up, Guidman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din.

a John Bruce, a celebrated violin-player in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This, I know, Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red wud Highlandman, constantly claimed it; and by all the old musical people here, believed to be the author of it.

Andrew and his cutty gun. The song to which this is set in the Museum, is mine; and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called, the Flower of Strathmore.

How lang and dreary is the night. I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you and to suit your favourite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page.

How lang and dreary is the night,
When I am frae my dearie;
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Though I were ne'er sae weary.

CHORUS.

For oh, her lanely nights are lang;
And oh, her dreams are eerie;
And oh, her widow'd heart is sair,
That's absent frae her dearie.

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie;
And now what seas between us roar,
How can I be but eerie?
For oh, &c.

How slow ye move ye heavy hours;
The joyless day how dreary:
It was na sae, ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.
For oh, &c.

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays and sings at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um has done in his London collection.*

My Eppie's voice, O vow it's sweet,
Even tho' she bans and scaulds a wee;
But when it's tun'd to sorrow's tale,
O, haith, it's doubly dear to me!
Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame:
Your blood is thin, ye've tint the gate,
Ye should na stray sae far frae hame.

"Nae hame have I," the minstrel said,
"Sad party-strife o'erturned my ha'!
And, weeping at the eve o' life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw."

This affecting poem is apparently incomplete. The author need not be ashamed to own himself. It is worthy of Burns, or of Macneil.

* Mr. Ritson.

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at *Duncan Gray*, to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance.

TUNE—"Duncan Gray."

LET not woman e'er complain,
Of inconsistency in love;
Let not woman e're complain,
Fickle man is apt to rove;

Look abroad through Nature's range,
Nature's mighty law is change;
Ladies would it not be strange;
Man should then a monster prove?

Mark the winds, and mark the skies;
Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow:
Sun and moon but set to rise,
Round and round the seasons go:

Why then ask of silly man,
To oppose great Nature's plan?
We'll be constant while we can—
You can be no more you know.

Since the above, I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page of this odds-and ends of a letter. As usual, I got into song; and returning home, I composed the following.

THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE
TO HIS MISTRESS.

TUNE—"Deil tak the wars."

SLEEP'ST thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?
Rosy morn now lifts his eye,
Numbering ilka bud which Nature
Waters wi' the tears o' joy:
Now through the leafy woods,
And by the reeking floods;
Wild Nature's tenants, freely, gladly stray;
The lintwhite in his bower
Chants o'er the breathing flower:
The lav'rock to the sky
Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,
While the sun and thou arise to bless the day.*

Phœbus gilding the brow o' morning
Banishes ilka darksome shade,
Nature gladdening and adorning;
Such to me my lovely maid.

* VARIATION. Now to the streaming fountain,
Or up the heathy mountain
The hart, hind, and roe, freely, wildly-wan on stray
In twining hazel bowers
His lay the linnet pours:
The lav'rock, &c.

When absent frae my fair,
The murky shades o' care
With starless gloom o'ercast my sullen sky;
But when in beauty's light,
She meets my ravish'd sight,
When through my very heart
Her beaming glories dart;
'Tis then I wake to life, to light and joy.*

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clark has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the Musical Museum. Here follow the verses I intend for it.

THE AULD MAN.

But lately seen in gladsome green
The woods rejoiced the day,
Thro' gentle showers the laughing flowers
In double pride were gay:
But now our joys are fled,
On winter blasts awa!
Yet maiden May, in rich array,
Again shall bring them a'.
But my white pow, nae kindly thowe
Shall melt the snaws of age;
My trunk of eild, but buss or beild,
Sinks in time's wintry rage.
Oh, age has weary days,
And nights o' sleepless pain!
Thou golden time o' youthfu' prime,
Why comest thou not again!

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please: whether this miserable drawling hotch-potch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence.

No. LXI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 27th October, 1794.

I AM sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often en-

* VARIATION. When frae my Chloris parted,
Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted, [sky;
Then night's gloomy shades, cloudy, dark, o'ercast my
But when she charms my sight,
In pride of beauty's light,
When thro' my very heart
Her beaming glories dart;
'Tis then, 'tis then I wake to life and joy.

raptured the Scottish bard! that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. "Craigie-burn wood" must certainly be adopted into my family, since *she* is the object of the song; but in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus verse from you. "O to be lying beyond thee, dearie," is perhaps a consumation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs. The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham, in sending you Ritson's Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his historical essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from Maggie Lauder. She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee.

I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P. S.—Pray, what do your anecdotes say concerning *Maggie Lauder*? was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely *spier for her if you ca'd at Anstruther town.*

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

No. LXII.

November, 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear sir, for your present: it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps, old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end; which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work.* In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for my lodging is on the cold ground On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration) she suggested an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song.

MY CHLORIS, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair:
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair.

The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,
And o'er the cottage sings:
For nature smiles as sweet I ween,
To shepherds as to kings.

* It does not appear whether Burns completed these anecdotes, &c. Something of the kind (probably the rude draughts) was found amongst his papers, and appear in p. xxvii.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string
In lordly lighted ha',
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blythe, in the birken shaw.

The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;
But are their hearts as light as ours,
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

The shepherd in the flowery glen,
In shepherd's phrase will woo;
The shepherd tells a finer tale,
But is his heart as true?

These wild-wood flowers, I've pu'd to deck
That spotless breast o' thine:
The courtier's gems may witness love—
But 'tis na love like mine.

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of *ma chere amie*. I assure you, I was never more earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last.—Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel and highly venerate; but somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion,

Where Love is liberty, and nature law.

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has power equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with the first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains to purchase!

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections to pick out songs of which the measure is something similar to what I want: and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhyme of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song, which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, I have cut down for an English dress to your *Dainyt Davie*, as follows.

SONG,

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH ONE.

It was the charming month of May,
When all the flowers were fresh and gay,
One morning by the break of day,
The youthful, charming Chloe;

From peaceful slumber she arose,
Girt one her mantle and her hose,

And o'er the flowery mead she goes,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

CHORUS.

Lovely was she by the dawn,
Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

The feather'd people you might see,
Perch'd all around on every tree,
In notes of sweetest melody
They hail the charming Chloe;

Till, painting gay the eastern skies,
The glorious sun began to rise,
Outrivall'd by the radiant eyes
Of youthful, charming Chloe.
Lovely was she, &c.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to "Rothiemurchie's Rant;" and you have Clarke to consult, as to the set of the air for singing.

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

TUNE—"Rothiemurchie's Rant."

CHORUS.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my dearie O.

Now Nature cleeds the flowery lea,
And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joys wi' me,
And say thou'lt be my dearie O.
Lassie wi' &c.

And when the welcome summer shower
Has cheer'ilk drooping little flower,
We'll to the breathing woodbine bower,
At sultry noon, my dearie O.
Lassie wi' &c.

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,
The weary shearer's hameward way;
Thro' yellow waving fields we'll stray,
And talk o' love, my dearie O.
Lassie wi', &c.

And when the howling wintry blast
Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest;
Enclasped to my faithfu' breast,
I'll comfort thee, my dearie O.*

---

* In some of the MSS. this stanza runs thus:

And should the howling wintry blast
Disturb my lassie's midnight rest:
I'll fauld thee to my faithful breast,
And comfort thee, my dearie O.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my dearie O.

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not I will insert it in the Museum.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as, "Deil tak the wars," to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of "Saw ye my Father;" by heavens the odds is gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well od ernized into the Scottish language, is, originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D' Urfey; so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan in the "Duenna," to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins

"When sable night each drooping plant restoring."

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows. *

Now for my English song to "Nancy's to the Greenwood," &c. †

There is an air, "The Caledonian Hunt's delight," to which I wrote, a song that you will find in Johnson. *Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon*; this air I think, might find a place among your hundred as Lear says, of his nights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm; and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is that in a few days, Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know has the same story of the "black keys;" but this account, which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now, to show you how difficult

* See the song in its first and best dress in p. 529. Our bard remarks upon it, "I could easily throw this into an English mould; but, to my taste, in the simple and the tender of the pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect.

† Here our poet gives a new edition of the song in p. 487 of this volume, and proposes it for another tune. The alterations are unimportant. The name Maria he changes to Eliza. Instead of the fifth and sixth lines, as in p. 488 he introduces,

"Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,
I fain my griefs would cover."

Instead of the tenth line, which seems not perfectly grammatical as it is printed, he has, more properly,

"Nor wilt, nor canst relieve me."

This edition ought to have been preferred had it been observed in time.

it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed that he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a countess informed me that the first person who introduced the air into this country, was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult then to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigie-burn wood;" and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment I shall write a new "Craigie-burn wood" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this; but an ungracious request is doubly so, by a tedious apology. To make you some amends as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done for when I am in a scribbling humour I know not when to give over.

No. LXIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

My Good Sir, 15*th November*, 1794.

Since receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the *Caledonian Hunt* is more bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses, in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice, and the second part, in many instances, cannot be sung at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be a universal favourite.

The verses for *Rothiemurchie* are so sweetly pastoral, and your scranade to Chloris, for *Deil tak the wars*, so passionately tender that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for *My lodging is on the cold ground* is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your Chlorises I suppose have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white-locks!

Farewell thou stream that winding flows, I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after *Nancy*; at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for "Dainty Davie" will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes. I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you to use no ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

No. LXIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

You see, my dear sir, what a punctual correspondent I am though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you; though it is not an hour old.

TUNE—"The sow's tail."

HE.

O Philly, happy be that day
When roving through the gather'd hay.
My youthfu' heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willie, aye I bless the grove
Where first I own'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou didst pledge the powers above,
To be my ain dear Willie.

HE.

As songsters of the early year
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,
So ilka day to me mair dear
And charming is my Philly.

SHE.

As on the brier the budding rose
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom grows
The love I bear my Willie.

HE.

The milder sun and bluer sky,
That crowns my harvest cares wi' joy,
Were ne'er sae welcome in my eye
As is a sight of Philly.

SHE.

The little swallow's wanton wing,
Tho' wafting o'er the flowery spring
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,
As meeting o' my Willie.

HE.

The bee, that thro' the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the opening flower,
Compar'd wi' my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o' Philly.

SHE.

The woodbine in the dewy weet
When evening shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet
As is a kiss o' Willie.

HE.

Let fortune's wheel at random rin,
And fools may tyne, and knaves may win:
My thoughts are a' bound upon ane,
And that's my ain dear Philly.

SHE.

What's a' the joys that gowd can gie!
I care nae wealth a single flie;
The lad I loe's the lad for me,
And that's my ain dear Willie.

Tell me honestly how you like it: and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name, Philly; but it is the common abreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only name that suits, has to my ear, a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing but burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as my coevals, has always mistaken vulgarity for simplicicy; whereas simplicity is as much *eloignee* from vulgarity on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit, on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, "Cragie-burn wood," that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect, and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not however a case in point with "Rothiemurchie;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," a chorus goes to my taste well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with "Roy's Wife," as well as "Rothiemurchie." In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhyme is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the staring note, in both tunes, has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try { O Roy's wife of Aldivalloch.
O lassie wi' the lint-white locks.
and
Compare with { Roy's wife of Aldivalloch.
Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I'm wrong I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

"The Caledonian Hunt" is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down: but pathosis certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, "Todlin hame" is, for wit and humour, an unparalled composition; and "Andro and his cutty gun' is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown! It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday for an air I like much—"Lumps o' pudding."

CONTENTED wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp, as they're creeping alang,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats and an auld Scottish sang.

I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought;
But man is a sodger, and life is a faught:
My mirth and guid humour are coin in my pouch,
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa'
A night o' guid fellowship sowthers it a':
When at the blythe end of our journey at last,
Wha the deil ever thinks o' the road he has past?

Blind chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way;
Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jad gae:
Come ease, or come travail; come pleasure or pain;
My warst word is—"Welcome and welcome again!"

If you do not relish the air, I will send it to Johnson.

Since yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a couple of English song to "Roy's wife." You will allow me that in this instance, my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish.

CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS MY KATY?

Tune—"Roy's wife."

CHORUS.

Canst thou leave me thus my Katy?
Canst thou leave me thus my Katy?
Well thou know'st my aching heart,
And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

It this thy plighted fond regard,
Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?
Is this thy faithful swain's reward—
An aching, broken heart, my Katy?
Canst thou, &c.

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy:
Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—
But not a love like mine my Katy?
Canst thou, &c.*

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish Blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth), that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts; the stock which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton-ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn, until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaken reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have, when the corn stems are green and full-grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the

* To this address, in the character of a forsaken lover, a reply was found on the part of the lady, among the MSS. of our bard, evidently in a female hand writing; which is doubtless that referred to in p. 506 of this volume. The temptation to give it to the public is irresistible; and if, in so doing, offence should be given to the fair authorities, the beauty of her verses must plead our excuse.

TUNE—'Roy's wife.'

CHORUS.

Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
'tweel thou know'st na every pang
Wad wring my bosom shouldst thou leave me:

Tell me that thou yet art true,
And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven,
And when this heart proves fause to thee,
Yon sun shall cease its course in heaven.
Stay, my Willie, &c.

But to think I was betray'd
That falsehood e'er our love should sunder
To take the flow'ret to my breast,
And find the guilefu' serpent under!
Stay, my Willie, &c.

Could I hope thou'st ne'er deceive,
Celestial pleasures might I choose 'em
I'd slight, nor seek in other spheres
That heaven I'd find within thy bosom.
Stay, my Willie, &c.

It may amuse the reader to be told, that on this occasion the gentleman and the lady have exchanged the dialects of their respective countries. The Scottish bard makes his address in pure English; the reply on the part of the lady, in the Scottish dialect, is, if we mistake not, by a young and beautiful Englishwoman.

smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one back-ventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds are wont to use in this country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or elee we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little use of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine; as I took ony mself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. "Pride in Poets is nae sin," and, I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish custom in the world.

No. LXV.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

28th November 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful, if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d'œuvre*. "Lumps of pudding" shall certainly make one of my family dishes: you have cooked it so capitally, that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast, when you find yourself in good spirits: these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown; it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, "The soldier's return," to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognizes her ain dear Willy, "She gaz'd, she redden'd like a rose." The three lines immediately following, are no doubt more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you, for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used

as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of any thing but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says, he remembers to have seen one in his younger days (made of wood instead of your bone,) and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

No. LXVI.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

December. 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward your book; and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song in the Museum, to "There'll ne'er be peace till Jamie comes hame," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to the air, I have just framed for you the following.

MY NANNIE'S AWA.

Tune—There'll ne'er be peace, &c.

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw;
But to me its delightless—my Nannie's awa.

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie's awa.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews o' the lawn,
The shepherd to warn o' the grey breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis, that hails the night-fa,'
Give over for pity—my Nannie's awa.

Come autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and grey,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' Nature's decay;
The dark dreary winter and wild driving snaw,
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa.

No. LXVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I fear for my songs: however, a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature, in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappear altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetic folks have been describing the spring, for instance; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic, Aiken on songs, says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently, is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, inverted into rhyme.

FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT.

Is there for honest poverty
That hangs his head, and a' that;
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure, and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin' grey, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show and a' that:
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that:
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that.
For a' that and a' that,
Its comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *Vive la bagatelle;* for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigie-burn wood?"

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigie-burn,
And blythe awakes the morrow,
But a' the pride o' spring's return
Can yield me nocht but sorrow,

I see the flowers and spreading trees,
I hear the wild birds singing;

But what a weary wight can please,
And care his bosom wringing?

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet dare na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.

If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love anither,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they'll wither.*
Farewell! God bless you.

No. XLVIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

My Dear Sir, *Edinburgh, 30th Jan,* 1795.

I thank you heartily for "Nannie's awa," as well as for "Craigie-burn," which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts, in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la baga telle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

No. LXIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

Here is another trial at your favourite air.

Tune.—'Let me in this ae night.'

O Lassie, art thou sleeping yet,
Or art thou wakin, I would wit,
For love has bound me hand and foot,
And I would fain be in, jo.

CHORUS.

O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night,
For pity's sake this ae night,
O rise and let me in jo.

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,
Nae star blinks thro' the driving sleet,
Tak pity on my weary feet,
And shield me frae the rain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

The bitter blast that round me blaws
Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;

* Craigie burn wood is situated on the banks of the river Moffat, and about three miles distant from the village of that name, celebrated for its medicinal waters. The woods of Craigie-burn and of Dumcrief, were at one time the favourite haunts of our poet. It was there he met the "Lassie wi' the lint-white locks," and that he conceived several of his beautiful lyrics.

The cauldness o' thy heart's the cause
Of a' my grief and pain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

HER ANSWER.

O Tell nae me o' wind and rain,
Upbraid nae me wi' cauld disdain,
Gae back the road ye cam again,
I winna let you in jo.

CHORUS.

I tell you now this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
And ance for a' this ae night;
I winna let you in, jo.

The snellest blast at mirkest hours,
That round the pathless wand'rer pours,
Is nought to what poor she endures
That's trusted faithless man, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The sweetest flower that deck'd the mead,
Now trodden like the vilest weed:
Let simple maid the lesson read,
The weird may be her ain jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The bird that charm'd his summer-day,
Is now the cruel fowler's prey;
Let witless, trusting woman say
How aft her fate's the same, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

I do not know whether it will do.

No. LXX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

Ecclefechan. 7th February, 1795.

My Dear Thomson,

You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late) I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked little village. I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress: I have tried to "gae back the gate I cam again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow, under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man, (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed,)

I, of two evils have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service !*

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and heaven knows, at present, I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it, "We'll gang nae mair to yon town?" I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

No. LXXI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear sir, for two epistles, one containing "Let me in this ae night;" and the other from Ecclefechan, proving, that drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy." You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song as it now stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for, "O wat ye wha's in this town."

No. LXXII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

ADDRESS TO THE WOODLARK.

TUNE.—"Where'll bonnie Annie lie." Or, "Loch-Erroch Side."

O STAY, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A helpless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art:
For surely that wad touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;
O' speechless grief, and dark despair:
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair?
Or my poor heart is broken?

*The bard must have been tipsy indeed, to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate.

Let me know your very first leisure how you like this song.

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

TUNE—"Aye wakin'."

CHORUS.

LONG, long the night,
Heavy comes the morrow,
While my soul's delight,
Is on her bed of sorrow.

Can I cease to care,
Can I cease to languish,
While my darling fair
Is on the couch of anguish?
Long, &c.

Every hope is fled,
Every fear is terror:
Slumber e'en I dread,
Every dream is horror.
Long, &c.

Hear me, pow'rs divine!
Oh, in pity hear me!
Take aught else of mine,
But my Chloris spare me!
Long, &c.

How do you like the foregoing? The Irish air, "Humours of Glen," is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the "Poor Soldier," there are not any descent verses for it, I have written for it as follow.

SONG.

TUNE—"Humours of Glen,"

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright beaming summers exalt the perfume,
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom:
Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly unseen:
For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
A listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

Thro' rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld CALEDONIA'S blast on the wave;
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they? The haunt o' the tyrant and slave!
The slave's spicy forests, and gold bubbling fountains,
The brave Caledonian views with disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save Love's willing fetters, the chains o' his Jean.

SONG.

TUNE—'Laddie, lie near me.'

'TWAS na her bonnie blue e'e was my ruin;
Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing:

'Twas the dear smile when nae body did mind us,
'Twas the bewitching, sweet, stown glance o' kindness.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,
Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me;
But tho' fell fortune should fate us to sever,
Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever.

Mary, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,
And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest!
And thou'rt the angel that never can alter,
Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

No. LXXIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

You must not think, my good sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of *the Cotter's Saturday Night* is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic "Address to the Wood-lark," your elegant "Panegyric on Caledonia," and your affecting verses on "Chloris' illness." Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to "Laddie, lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

No. LXXIV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH SONG.

AIR.—"John Anderson my jo."

How cruel are the parents
Who riches only prize,
And to the wealthy booby,
Poor woman sacrifice.
Meanwhile the hapless daughter
Has but a choice of strife;
To shun a tyrant father's hate,
Become a wretched wife.

The ravening hawk pursuing,
The trembling dove thus flies,
To shun impelling ruin
A while her pinions tries;
'Till of escape despairing,
No shelter or retreat,
She trusts the ruthless falconer,
And drops beneath his feet.

SONG.

TUNE—"Deil tak the wars."

MARK yonder pomp of costly fashion,
Round the wealthy, titled bride:
But when compared with real passion,
Poor is all that princely pride.
What are their showy treasures?
What are their noisy pleasures?
The gay, gaudy glare of vanity and art.
The polish'd jewel's blaze,
May draw the wond'ring gaze,
And courtly grandeur bright,
The fancy may delight,
But never, never can come near the heart.

But did you see my dearest Chloris,
In simplicity's array;
Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,
Shrinking from the gaze of day.
O then the heart alarming,
And all resistless charming,
In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing soul!
Ambition would disown
The world's imperial crown,
Even Av'rice would deny
His worshipp'd deity,
And feel thro' every vein Love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit of poetizing, provided that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's phrenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment "holding high converse" with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

No. LXXV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

May, 1794.

TEN thousand thanks, for your elegant present; though I am ashamed of the value of it, being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production. My phiz is "sae kenspeckle," that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of "ill-deedie damn'd, wee, rumble-garie urchin" of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief, which

even at twa days auld I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.

Give the inclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

No. LXXVI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

13th May, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you: So I beg you would not make a fool of me again, by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last. Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of William and Margaret, and is to give it to me, to be inrolled among the elect.

No. LXXVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

In *Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad*, the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement.

O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Tho' father and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame at whose shrine I, the priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning, a Fair One, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment; and dispute her commands if you dare!

SONG.

TUNE.—'This is no my ain house.'

CHORUS.

O this is no my ain lassie
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.

I see a form, I see a face,
Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
It wants to me the witching grace,
The kind o' love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
And lang has had my heart in thrall;
And aye it charms my very saul,
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink by a' unseen;
But gleg as light are lover's e'en,
When kind love is in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

It may escape the courtly sparks,
It may escape the learned clerks;
But weel the watching lover marks,
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The inclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I inclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, "O bonnie was yon rosy brier." I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly roused celestial spark will soon be smothered in the fogs of indulgence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses, to the air of "I wish my love was in the mire;" and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I inclose you "For a' that and a' that," which was never in print: it is a much superior song to mine. I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

To MR. CUNNINGHAM.

SCOTTISH SONG.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,
And strew'd the lea wi' flowers;
The furrow'd, waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers;
While ilka thing in nature join
Their sorrows to forego,

O why thus all alone are mine
The weary steps of woe!

The trout within yon wimpling burn
Glides swift, a silver dart,
And safe beneath the shady thorn
Defies the angler's art;
My life was ance that careless stream,
That wanton trout was I;
But love, wi' unrelenting beam,
Has scorch'd my fountains dry.

The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows,
Which save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows,
Was mine; till love has o'er me past,
And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the with'ring blast,
My youth and joy consume.

The waken'd lav'rock warbling springs,
And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blythe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye;
As little reckt I sorrow's power,
Until the flowery snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
Made me the thrall o' care.

O had my fate been Greenland's snows,
Or Afric's burning zone,
Wi' man and nature leagued my foes,
So Peggy ne'er I'd known!
The wretch whase doom is, "hope nae mair,"
That tongue his woes can tell!
Within whase bosom, save despair,
Nae kinder spirits dwell.

SCOTTISH SONG.

O BONNIE was yon rosy brier,
That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;
And bonnie she, and ah! how dear!
It shaded frae the e'enin' sun.

Yon rosebuds in the morning dew
How pure, amang the leaves sae green;
But purer was the lover's vow
They witness'd in their shade yestreen.

All in its rude and prickly bower,
That crimson rose, how sweet and fair!
But love is far a sweeter flower
Amid life's thorny path o' care.

The pathless wild, and wimpling burn,
Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine;
And I the world, nor wish, nor scorn,
Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems presented to the lady, whom in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris.

'Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralizing muse.

Since thou, in all thy youth and charms,
Must bid the world adieu,
(A world 'gainst peace in constant arms)
To join the friendly few.

Since thy gay morn of life o'ercast,
Chill came the tempest's lour;
(And ne'er misfortune's eastern blast
Did nip a fairer flower.)

Since life's gay scenes must charm no more,
Still much is left behind:
Still nobler wealth hast thou in store,
The comforts of the mind!

Thine is the self-approving glow,
On conscious honour's part;
And, dearest gift of heaven below,
Thine friendship's truest heart.

The joys refined of sense and taste
With every muse to rove;
And doubly were the poet blest
These joys could he improve.

Une bagatelle de l'amitie.

No. LXXVIII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, Aug. 3rd*, 1795.

THIS will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman, but his friend who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! It is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter "O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," to the prosaic line, "Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye my lad." I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish,

therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeany, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.*

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few songs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray, was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P.S.—The lady's "For a' that and a' that" is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to your's than I to Hercules.

No. LXXIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

ENGLISH SONG.

FORLORN, my love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee I wander here;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I most repine, love.

CHORUS.

O wert thou love, but near me,
But near, near, near me;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,
That blasts each bud of hope and joy;
And shelter, shade, nor home have I,
Save in these arms of thine, love.
O wert, &c.

Cold, alter'd friendship's cruel part,
To poison fortune's ruthless dart—
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, love.
O wert, &c.

But dreary tho' the moments fleet,
O let me think we yet shall meet!
That only ray of solace sweet
Can on thy Chloris shine, love.
O wert, &c.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the *speed* of my Pegasus; but what say you to his *bottom?*

* The Editor, who has heard the heroine of this song sing it herself in the very spirit of arch simplicity that it requires, thinks Mr. Thompson's petition unreasonable. If we mistake not, this is the same lady who produced the lines to the tune of ROY'S WIFE, p. 539.

No. LXXX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

SCOTTISH BALLAD.

TUNE—"The Lothian Lassie."

LAST May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hatéd like men,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me, believe me,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me.

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black e'en,
And vow'd for my love he was dying;
I said he might die when he liked, for Jean,
The Lord forgi'e me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgi'e me for lying!

A weel-stocked mailen, himsel' for the laird,
And marriage aff hand, were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kend it, or cared,
But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad ye think? in a fortnight or less,
The deil tak his taste to gae near her!
He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess,*
Guess ye how the jad I could bear her, could bear her,
Guess ye how the jad I could bear her.

But a' the neist week as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste of Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there!
I glowred as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowred as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recover'd her hearin,
And how her new shoon fit her auld shachlet feet,
But heavens! how he fell a swearin, a swearin!
But heavens! how he fell a swearin.

He begged, for Gudesake! I wad be his wife,
Or else I would kill him wi' sorrow:
So, e'en to preserve the poor body in life,

* In the original MS. this line runs, "He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess:" Mr. Thomson objected to this word, as well as to the word "Dalgarnock" in the next verse. Mr. Burns replies as follows:

"Gateslack is the name of a particular place, a kind of passage, up amang the Lawther hills, on the confines of this country." "Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial-ground." However let the first line run, "He up the lang loan," &c.

It is always a pity to throw out any thing that gives locality to our poet's verses.

I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

FRAGMENT.

TUNE—"The Caledonian Hunt's delight."

Why, why tell thy lover,
Bliss he never must enjoy;
Why, why undeceive him,
And give all his hopes the lie.

O why, while fancy, raptured, slumbers,
Chloris, Chloris all the theme,
Why, why wouldst thou, cruel,
Wake thy lover from his dream.

. . . . . .

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the toothache, so have not a word to spare.

No. LXXXI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

MY DEAR SIR, *3d June*, 1795.

YOUR English verses to "Let me in this ae night," are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the "Lothian Lassie" is a masterpiece for its humour and naiveté. The fragment for the "Caledonian Hunt," is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; but, nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord make us thankful.

No. LXXXII.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

5th February, 1796.

O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye wauking, I would wit?

THE pause you have made, my dear sir, is awful! Am I never to hear from you again? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish "married o immortal verse." We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now naturalized, and reckoned our own good subjects. Indeed we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan; what is your opinion of this?

No. LXXXIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

February, 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear sir, for your handsome, elegant present, to Mrs. B———, and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar.—Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipped three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

TUNE—"Balinamona Ora."

AWA wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms;
O, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

CHORUS.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher; the nice yellow guineas for me.

Your beauty's a flower, in the morning that blows,
And withers the faster, the faster it grows;
But the rapturous charm o' the bonnie green knowes,
Ilk spring they're new deckit wi' bonnie white yowes.
Then, hey, &c.

And e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,
The brightest o' beauty may cloy, when possest;
But the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie imprest,
The langer ye hae them—the mair they're carest.
Then, hey, &c.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs, I dislike one thing; the name Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad.—Of this, and some things else, in my next: I have more amendments to propose.—What you once mentioned of "flaxen locks" is just: they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty.—Of this also again.—God bless you!*

No. LXXXIV.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

April, 1796.

YOUR "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher" is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

* Our poet never explained what name he would have substituted for Chloris.—CTE BY MR. THOMSON.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect he himself says, they will far exceed the acquatinta plates he did for the "Gentle Shepherd," because, in the etching, he sees clearly what he is doing; but not so with the acquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural, than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

No. LXXXV.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

Alas, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! "By Babel streams I have sat and wept," almost ever since I wrote you last; I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness; and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

> Say wherefore has an indulgent heaven
> Light to the comfortless and wretched given?

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe tavern here, which for these many years has been my howf, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. *Woo'd and married and a'* is admirable! The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire *Turnimspike*. What I like least is, *Jenny said to Jockie*. Besides the female being in her appearance . . . . if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a . . . . subject!

No. LXXXVI.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I need not tell you, my good sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then, it is to be hoped, you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P.S.—Mrs. Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

No. LXXXVII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

My Dear Sir,

I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired, *Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney*, but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

CHORUS.

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear,
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as the parting tear—Jessie!

Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied!
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessie!
Here's a health, &c.

I mourn thro' the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless I muse on thy charms;
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lock't in thy arms—Jessie!
Here's a health, &c.

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree—Jessie!
Here's a health, &c.*

No. LXXXVIII.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

This will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you chose, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies.† I had rather be the author of five well-written songs, than of ten otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business!

* In the letter to Mr. Thomson, the three first stanzas only are given, and Mr. Thomson supposed our poet had never gone farther. Among his MSS. was, however, found the fourth stanza, which completes this exquisite song, the last finished offspring of his muse.

† It is needless to say, that this revisal Burns did not live to perform.

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him. This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

No. LXXXIX.

MR. BURNS *to* MR. THOMSON.

12*th July*, 1796.

After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel · · · · · of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song genius you have seen. I tried my hand on *Rothiemurchie* this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines. They are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

SONG.

Tune—"Rothiemurchie."

Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou wert wont to do?

Full well thou knowest I love thee, dear,
Couldst thou to malice lend an ear!
O did not love exclaim, "Forbear!
Nor use a faithful lover so."
Fairest maid, &c.

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Thy wonted smiles, O let me share;
And by thy beauteous self I swear,
No love but thine my heart shall know.
Fairest maid, &c.*

NO. XC.

MR. THOMSON *to* MR. BURNS.

My Dear Sir, 14*th July*, 1796.

Ever since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alle-

* These verses, and the letter enclosing them, are written in a character that marks the very feeble state of their author. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But about this time his mind began to be at times unsettled, and the horrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination. He died on the 22d of this month.

viate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 11th, and with great pleasure inclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were the Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake.

Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of Editor. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours, faithfully.

The verses to "Rothiemurchie" will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

APPENDIX.

It may gratify curiosity to know some particulars of the history of the preceding Poems, on which the celebrity of our Bard has been hitherto founded: and with this view the following extract is made from a letter of Gilbert Burns, the brother of our Poet, and his friend and confidant from his earliest years.

DEAR SIR, *Mossgiel, 2nd April*, 1798.

YOUR letter of the 14th of March I received in due course, but, from the hurry of the season, have been hitherto hindered from answering it. I will now try to give you what satisfaction I can in regard to the particulars you mention. I cannot pretend to be very accurate in respect to the dates of the poems, but none of them, except "Winter, a Dirge," (which was a juvenile production,) "the Death and Dying Words of poor Mailie," and some of the songs, were composed before the year 1784. The circumstances of the poor sheep were pretty much as he has described them; he had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlie. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious looking awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoe's appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her Death and Dying words pretty much in the way they now stand.

Among the earliest of his poems was the "Epistle to Davie." Robert often composed without a regular plan. When any thing made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in summer, 1784, when in the interval of harder labour, he and I were weeding in the garden (kailyard,) that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scotch poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression—but here, there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely

seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed very well pleased with my criticism; and we talked of sending it to some magazine, but as this plan afforded no opportunity of knowing how it would take, the idea was dropped.

It was, I think, in the winter following, as we were going together with carts for coal to the family fire (and I could yet point out the particular spot), that the author first repeated to me the "Address to the Deil." The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him, by running over his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have, from various quarters, of this august personage. "Death and Dr. Hornbook," though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. The schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke up the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised, that "Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop, gratis." Robert was at a mason-meeting, in Tarbolton, when the "Dominie" unfortunately made too ostentations a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparition, he mentions in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind; this set him to work for the rest of the way home. These circumstances he related when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me. The "Epistle to John Lapraik" was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. He says in that poem, "On fasten e'en he had a rockin'" (p. 365). I believe he has omitted the word rocking in the glossary. It is a term derived from those primitive times, when the country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock, or distaff. This simple instrument is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of going a-rocking, or with the rock. As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave way to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women.

It was at one of these *rockings* at our house, when we had twelve or fifteen young people with their *rocks*, that Lapraik's song, beginning—"When I upon thy bosom lean," was sung, and we were informed who was the author. Upon this Robert wrote his first epistle to Lapraik; and his second in reply to his answer. The verses to the "Mouse and Mountain Daisy" were composed on the occasions mentioned, and while the author was holding the plough: I could point out the particular spot where each was composed. Holding the plough was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic

compositions, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise. Several of the poems were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not conceive a more mortifying picture of human life, than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy, "Man was made to Mourn," was composed. Robert had frequently remarked to me, that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, "Let us worship God," used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the "Cotter's Saturday Night." The hint of the plan, and title of the poem, were taken from Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle." When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together when the weather was favourable on the Sunday afternoons (those precious breathing-times to the labouring part of the community), and enjoyed such Sundays as would make one regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the "Cotter's Saturday Night." I do not recollect to have read or heard any thing by which I was more highly *electrified*. The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth, thrilled with peculiar ecstasy through my soul. I mention this to you, that you may see what hit the taste of unlettered criticism. I should be glad to know, if the enlightened mind and refined taste of Mr. Roscoe, who has borne such honourable testimony to this poem, agrees with me in the selection. Fergusson, in his "Hallow Fair" of Edinburgh, I believe, likewise furnished a hint of the title and plan of the "Holy Fair." The farcical scene the poet there describes was often a favourite field of his observation, and the most of the incidents he mentions had actually passed before his eyes. It is scarcely necessary to mention, that the "Lament" was composed on that unfortunate passage in his matrimonial history, which I have mentioned in my letter to Mrs. Dunlop, after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided. "The Tale of Twa Dogs" was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken. Robert had had a dog, which he called *Luath*, that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person the night before my father's death. Robert said to me, that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow upon his old friend *Luath*, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book under the title of "Stanzas to the Memory of a quadruped Friend:" but this plan was given up for the tale as it now stands. *Cæsar* was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding chat with his favourite Luath. The first time Robert heard the spinet played upon was at the house of Dr. Lawrie, then minister of the parish of Loudon now in Glasgow, having given up the parish in favour of his son. Dr. Lawrie has several daughters; one of them played; the father and mother led down the dance; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the poet, and the other guests, mixed in it. It was a delightful family scene for our poet, then lately introduced to the world. His mind was roused to a poetic enthusiasm, and the

stanzas, p. 352, were left in the room where he slept. It was to Dr. Lawrie that Dr. Blacklock's letter was addressed, which my brother, in his letter to Dr. Moore, mentions as the reason of his going to Edinburgh.

When my father *feued* his little property near Alloway-Kirk, the wall of the church-yard had gone to ruin, and cattle had free liberty of pasture in it. My father, with two or three other neighbours, joined in an application to the town council of Ayr, who were superiors of the adjoining land, for liberty to rebuild it, and raised by subscription a sum for enclosing this ancient cemetery with a wall; hence he came to consider it as his burial place, and and we learned that reverence for it people generally have for the burial-place of their ancestors. My brother was living in Ellisland, when Captain Grose, on his peregrinations through Scotland, staid some time at Carse-house in the neighbourhood, with Captain Robert Riddel of Glenriddel, a particular friend of my brother's. The Antiquarian and the Poet were "Unco pack and thick thegither." Robert requested of Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he would make a drawing of Alloway-Kirk, as it was the burial-place of his father, and where he himself had a sort of claim to lay down his bones when they should be no longer serviceable to him; and added, by way of encouragement, that it was the scene of many a good story of witches and apparitions, of which he knew the Captain was very fond. The Captain agreed to the request, provided the poet would furnish a witch story, to be printed along with it. "Tam o' Shanter" was produced on this occasion, and was first published in "Grose's Antiquities of Scotland."

The poem is founded on a traditional story. The leading circumstances of a man riding home very late from Ayr, in a stormy night, his seeing a light in Alloway Kirk, his having the curiosity to look in, his seeing a dance of witches, with the devil playing on the bag-pipe to them, the scanty covering of one of the witches, which made him so far forget himself as to cry—"Weel loupen, short sark!"—with the melancholy catastrophe of the piece; it is all a true story, and can be well attested by many respectable old people in that neighbourhood.

I do not at present recollect any circumstances respecting the other poems, that could be at all interesting; even some of those I have mentioned, I am afraid, may appear trifling enough, but you will only make use of what appears to you of consequence.

The following poems in the first Edinburgh edition were not in that published in Kilmarnock. "Death and Dr. Hornbook;" "The Bi s of Ayr;" "The Calf;" (the poet had been with Mr. Gavin Hamilton in the morning, who said jocularly to him when he was going to church, in allusion to the injunction of some parents to their children, that he must be sure to bring a note of the sermon at mid-day; this address to the Reverend Gentleman on his text was accordingly produced;) "The Ordination;" "The Address to the Unco Guid;" "Tam Samson's Elegy;" "A Winter Night;" "Stanzas on the same occasion as the preceding prayer;" "Verses left at a Reverend Friend's house;" "The first Psalm;" "Prayer under the pressure of violent anguish;" "The first six Verses of the nineticth Paslm;" "Verses to Miss Logan, with Beattie's Poems;"

"To a Haggis;" "Address to Edinburgh;" "John Barleycorn;" "When Guildford Guid;" "Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows;" "Green grow the Rashes;" "Again rejoicing Nature sees;" "The gloomy Night;" "No Churchman am I."

If you have never seen the first edition, it will, perhaps, not be amiss to transcribe the preface, that you may see the manner in which the Poet made his first awe-struck approach to the bar of public judgment.

Preface to the first Edition of Burns' Poems, published at Kilmarnock.

"The following Trifles are not the production of the poet, who with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps, amid the elegances and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names, their countrymen, are, at least in their original language, "a fountain shut up, and a book sealed." Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for conmencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners, he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality of friendship, awakened his vanity so far as to make him think any thing of his worth showing; and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward."

"Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as—an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsence on the world; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence forsooth.

"It is an observation of that celebrated poet Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honour to our nation, and our species, that 'Humility has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If any critic catches at the word "genius," the author tells him once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre beneath the lowest and worst character, which he hopes his worst enemy will never give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor unfortunate Fergusson, he with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame for servile imitation.

"To his Subscribers the Author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over the counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship, for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. If he begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honour him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but, if after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dullness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion."

. . . . . .

I am, dear Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

GILBERT BURNS.

DR. CURRIE, Liverpool.

To this history of the poems which are contained in this volume, it may be added, that our author appears to have made little alteration in them after their original composition, except in some few instances, where considerable additions have been introduced. After he had attracted the notice of the public by his first edition, various criticisms were offered him on the peculiarities of his style, as well as of his sentiments, and some of these which remain among his manuscripts, are by persons of great taste and judgment. Some few of these criticisms he adopted, but the far greater part he rejected; and, though something has by this means been lost in point of delicacy and correctness, yet a deeper impression is left of the strength and originality of his genius. The firmness of our poet's character, arising from a just confidence in his own powers, may, in part, explain his tenaciousness of his peculiar expressions; but it may be in some degree accounted for also, by the circumstances under which the poems were composed. Burns did not, like men of genius born under happier auspices, retire, in the moment of inspiration, to the silence and solitude of his study, and commit his verses to paper as arranged themselves in his mind. Fortune did not afford him this indulgence. It was during the toils of daily labour that his fancy exerted itself; the muse, as he himself informs us, found him at the plough. In this situation, it was necessary to fix his verses on his memory, and it was many days, nay week, after a poem was finished, before it was written down. During all this time, by frequent repetition, the association between the thought and the expression was confirmed, and the impartiality of taste with which written language is reviewed and retouched after it has faded on the memory, could not in such instances be exerted. The original manuscripts of many of his poems are preserved, and they differ in nothing material from the last printed edition. Some few variations may be noticed.

In the "Author's earnest Cry and Prayer," after the stanzas, p. 288, beginning,

Erskine, a spunkie Norland Billie,

there appears, in his book of manuscripts, the following

Thee, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented
If Bardies e'er are represented:
I ken if that your sword were wanted
Ye'd lend your hand,
But when there's ought to say anent it,
Ye're at a stand.

Sodger Hugh is evidently the present Earl of Eglinton, then Colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield, and representing in Parliament the county of Ayr. Why this was left out in printing does not appear. The noble Earl will not be sorry to see this notice of him, familiar though it be, by a bard whose genius he admired, and whose fate he lamented.

2. In "The Address to the Deil," the seventh stanzas, in p. 309, ran originally thus:

Lang syne in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonnie Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancing' sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guiltless heart.

3. In "The Elegy on Poor Mailie," the second stanzas, in p. 312, beginning,

She was nae get o' moorland tips,

was, at first, as follows:—

She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo' like goats, and legs like trams
She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs,
A famous breed:
Now Robin, greetin' chows the hams
O' Mailie dead.

It were a pity that the Fairlie lambs should lose the honour once intended them.

4. But the chief variations are found in the poems here introduced, for the first time, in the edition in two volumes small octavo, published in 1792. Of the poem written in Friars Carse Hermitage, there are several editions, and one of these* has nothing in common with the printed poem but the four first lines. The poem that is published, which was his second effort on the subject, received considerable alterations in printing.

Instead of the six lines beginning,

Say man's true genuine estimate,

in manuscript the following are inserted,

Say the criterion of their fate,
Th' important query of their state,
Is not, part thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Wert thou cottager or king?
Prince or peasant?—no such thing.

5. The *Epistle to R. G. of F., Esq.*, that is, to *R. Graham of Fintry, Esq.*, also underwent considerable alterations, as may be col-

* This is given in the Correspondence.

lected from the volume of Correspondence. This style of poetry was new to our poet, and though he was fitted to excel in it, it cost him more trouble than his Scottish poetry. On the contrary. *Tam o' Shanter* seems to have issued perfect from the author's brain. The only considerable alteration made on reflection, is the omission of four lines, which had been inserted after the poem was finished, at the end of the dreadful catalogue of the articles found on the "haly table," and which appeared in the first edition of the poem, printed separately. They came after the last line page 398,

Which even to name would be unlawfu',

and are as follows —

Three lawyers' tongues turn'd inside out,
Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout,
And priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck;
Lay stinking vile in every neuk.

These lines, which, independent of other objections, interrupt and destroy the emotions of terror which the preceding description had excited, were very properly left out of the printed collection, by the advice of Mr. Fraser Tytler; to which Burns seem to have paid some deference.

6. The *Address to the Shade of Thomson*, page 391, began in the first manuscript copy in the following manner :—

While cold eyed Spring, a virgin coy,
Unfolds her verdant mantle sweet,
Or pranks the sod in frolic joy,
A carpet for her youthful feet:
While Summer, with a matron's grace,
Walks stately in the cooling shade,
And oft delighted loves to trace
The progress of the spiky blade:
While Autmmn, benefactor kind,
With age's honours clad,
Surveys, with self-approving mind,
Each creature on his bounty fed, &c.

By the alteration in the printed poem, it may be questioned whether the poetry is much improved; the poet, however, has found means to introduce the shades of Dryburgh, the residence of the Earl of Buchan, at whose request these verses were written.

These observations might be extended, but what are already offered will satisfy curiosity, and there is nothing of any importance that could be added.

GLOSSARY.

THE *ch* and *ph* have always the gutteral sound. The sound of the English diphthong *oo*, is commonly spelled *ou*. The French *u*, a sound which often occurs in the Scottish language, is marked *oo*, or *ui*. The *a* in genuine Scottish words, except when forming a diphthong, or followed by an *e* mute after a single consonant, sounds generally like the broad English *a* in *wall*. The Scottish diphthong *æ*, very often, sound like the French *e* masculine. The Scottish diphthong *cy*, sounds like the Latin *ei*.

A.

A', All
Aback, away, aloof
Abeigh, at a shy distance
Aboon, above, up
Abread, abroad, in sight
Abreed, in breadth
Addle, putrid water, &c.
Ae, one
Aff, off; aff loof, unpremeditated
Afore, before
Aft, oft
Aften, often
Agley, off the right line; wrong
Aiblins, perhaps
Ain, own
Airle-penny, Airles, earnest money
Airn, iron
Aith, an oath
Aiver, an old horse
Aizle, a hot cinder
Alake, alas
Alane, alone
Akwart, awkward
Amaist, almost
Amang, among
An', and; if
Ance, once
Ane, one and
Anent, over, against
Anither, another
Ase, ashes
Asklent, asquint; aslant
Asteer, abroad; stirring
Athart, thwart
Aught, possession; as, In a' my aught, in all my possession
Auld lang syne, olden time
Auld, old
Auldfarran, or, auld farrant, sagacious, cunning, prudent
Ava, at all
Awa', away
Awfu', awful
Awn, the beard of barley, &c.
Awnie, bearded
Ayont, beyond

B

Ba', ball
Backets, ash boards
Backlins, coming; returning
Back, returning
Bad, did bid
Baide, endured, did stay
Baggie, the belly
Bainie, having large bones, stout
Bairn, a child
Bairntime, a family of children, a brood
Baith, both
Ban, to swear
Bane, bone
Bang, to beat; to strive
Bardie, diminutive of bard
Barefit, barefooted
Barmie, of, or like barm
Batch, a crew, a gang
Batts, bots
Baudrons, a cat
Bauld, bold
Bawk, bank
Bawsn't, having a white stripe down the face

Be, to let be; to give over
Bear, barley
Beastie, diminutive of beast
Beet, to add fuel to fire
Beld, bald
Belyve, by and bye
Ben, into the spence or parlour; a spence
Benlomond, a noted mountain in Dumbartonshire
Bethankit, grace after meat
Beuk, a book
Bicker, a kind of wooden dish; a short race
Bie, or Bield, shelter
Bien, wealthy, plentiful
Big, to build
Biggin, building; a house
Biggit, built
Bill, a bull
Billie, a brother; a young fellow
Bing, a heap of grain, potatoes, &c.
Birk, birch
Birken-shaw, Birchen-wood-shaw a small wood
Birkie, a clever fellow
Birring, the noise of partridges, &c. when they spring
Bit, crisis, nick of time
Bizz, a bustle, to buzz
Blastie, a shrivelled dwarf; a term of contempt
Blastit, blasted
Blate, bashful, sheepish
Blather, bladder
Bladd, a flat piece; any thing; to slap
Blaw, to blow, to boast
Bleerit, bleared, sore with rheum
Bleert and blin', bleared and blind.
Bleezing, blazing
Blellum, an idle, talking fellow
Blether, to talk idly; nonsense
Blink, a little while: a smiling look; to shine by fits
Blinker, a term of contempt
Blinkin, smirking
Blue-gown, one of those beggars who get annually, on the sovereign's birth-day, a blue cloak or gown, with a badge
Bluid, blood
Bluntie, a sniveller, a stupid person
Blype, a shred, a large piece
Bock, to vomit, to gush intermittently
Bodle, a small gold coin
Bogles, spirits, hobgoblins
Bonnie or bonny, handsome
Bonnock, a kind of thick cake of bread, a small jannock, or loaf made of oatmeal
Boord, a board
Boortree, the shrub elder; planted much of old in hedges of barn-yards, &c
Boost, behaved, must needs
Bore, a hole in the wall
Botch, an angry tumour
Bousing, drinking
Bow-kail, cabbage
Bowt, bended, crooked
Brackens, fern
Brae, a declivity; a precipice
Braid, broad
Braingd't, reeled forward
Braik, a kind of harrow
Braindge, to rush rashly forward
Brak, broke, made insolvent
Branks, a kind of wooden curb for horses
Brash, a sudden illness
Brats, coarse clothes, rags, &c.
Brattle, a short race, hurry fury;
Braw, fine, handsome
Brawly, or brawlie, very well
Braxie, a morbid sheep
Breastie, diminutive of breast
Breastit, did spring up or forward
Breckan, fern
Breef, an irresistible spell
Breeks, breeches
Brent, smooth
Brewin', brewing
Brie, juier, liquid
Brig, a bridge
Brunstane, brimstone
Brisket, the breast, the bosom
Brither, a brother
Brock, a badger
Brogue, a hum, a trick

Broose, broth; a race at country weddings, who shall first reach the bridegroom's house on returning from the church
Browster-wives, ale-house-wives
Brugh, a burgh
Bruzlzie, a broil, a combustion
Brunt, did burn, burnt
Brust, to burst; burst
Buchan-bullers, the boiling of the sea among the rocks of Buchan
Buckskin, an inhabitant of Virginia
Bught, a pen
Bughtin-time, the time of collecting the sheep in the pens to be milked
Buirdly, stout made; broad made
Bumclock, a humming beetle that flies in the summer evenings
Bumming, humming as bees
Bummle, to blunder
Bunker, a window-seat
Burdies, diminutive of birds
Bure, did bear
Burn, water, a rivulet
Burnewin, i. e. burn the wind; a blacksmith
Burnie, diminutive of burn
Buskie, bushey
Buskit, dressed
Busks, dresses
Bussle, a bustle; to bustle
Buss, shelter
But, bot, with: without
But an' ben, the country kitchen and parlour
By himsel, lunatic, distracted
Byke, a bee-hive
Byre, a cow-stable; a sheep-pen

C

CA', to call, to name; to drive
Ca't; or ca'd called, driven; calved
Cadger, a carrier
Cadie, or Caddie, a person: a young fellow
Caff, chaff
Caird, a tinker
Cairn, a loose heap of stones
Calf-ward, a small enclosure for calves
Callan, a boy
Caller, fresh; sound; refreshing.
Canie, or cannie, gentle, mild; dexterous.
Cannilie, dexterously;
Cantie, or canty, cheerful, merry
Cantrip, a charm, a spell.
Cape-stane, cope-stone; keystone
Careerin, cheerfully
Carl, an old man
Carlin, a stout old woman
Cartes, cards
Caudron, a caldron
Cauk and keel, chalk and red clay
Cauld, cold
Caup, a wooden drinking vessel
Cesses, taxes
Chanter, a part of a bagpipe
Chap, a person, a fellow; a blow
Chaup, a stroke, a blow
Cheekit, cheeked
Cheep, a chirp; to chirp
Chiel, or cheel, a young fellow
Chimla, or chimlie, a fire-grate, a fire place
Chimla-lug, the fireside
Chittering, shivering, trembling
Chockin, choking
Chow, to chew
Chuffie, fat-faced
Clachan, a small village about a church; a hamlet
Claise, or claes, clothes
Claith, cloth
Claivers, nonsense; not speaking sense
Clap, clapper of a mill
Clarkit, wrote
Clash, an idle tale, the story of the day
Clatter, to tell idle stories; an idle story
Claught, snatched at, laid hold of
Claut, to clean; to scrape
Clavers, idle stories
Claw, to scratch
Cleed, to clothe
Cleede, clothes
Cleekit, having caught
Clinkin, jerking; clinking
Clinkumbell, he who rings the church-bell

Clips, shears
Clishmaclaver, idle conversation
Clock, to hatch; a beetle
Clockin, hatching
Cloot, the hoof of a cow, sheep &c
Clootie, an old name for the Devil
Clour, a bump or swelling after a blow
Cluds, clouds
Coaxin, wheedling
Coble, a fishing boat
Cockernony, a lock of hair tied upon a girl's head; a cap
Coft, bought
Cog, a wooden dish
Coggie, diminutive of cog
Coila, from Kyle, a district of Ayrshire; so called, saith tradition, from Coil, or Coilus, a Pictish monarch
Collie, a general and sometimes a particular name for country curs
Collieshangie, quarrelling, an uproar
Commaun, command
Cood, the cud
Coof, a blockhead; a ninny
Cookit, appeared and disappeared by fits
Coost, did cast
Coot, the ancle or foot
Cootie, a wooden kitchen dish: —also, those fowls whose legs are clad with feathers are said to be cootie
Corbies, a species of the crow
Core, corps; party; clan
Corn't, fed with oats
Cotter, the inhabitant of a cot-house, or cottager
Couthie, kind, loving
Cove, a cave
Cowe, to terrify; to keep under, to lop fright; a branch of furze, broom, &c.
Cowp, to barter; to tumble over; a gang
Cowpit, tumbled
Cowrin, cowering
Cowt, a colt
Cozie, snug
Crabbit, crabbed, fretful
Crack, conversation; to converse
Crackin, conversing
Craft, or croft, a field near a house (in old husbandry)
Craiks, cries or calls incessantly; a bird
Crambo-clink, or crambo-jingle, rhymes, doggrel verses
Crank, the noise of an ungreased wheel
Crankous, fretful, captious
Cranreuch, the hoar frost
Crap, a crop; to crop
Craw, a crow of a cock; a rook
Creel, a basket; to have one's wits in a creel, to be crazed; to be fascinated
Creepie-stool, the same as cutty-stool
Cresshie, greasy
Crood, or croud, to coo as a dove
Croon, a hollow and continued moan; to make a noise like the continued roar of a bull; to hum a tune
Crouchie, crook-backed
Croose, cheerfully; courageously
Crowdie, a composition of oat-meal and boiled water, sometimes from the broth of beef, mutton, &c.
Crowdie-time, breakfast time
Crowlin, crawling
Crummock, a cow with crooked horns
Crump, hard and brittle; spoken of bread
Crunt, a blow on the head with a cudgel
Cuif, a blockhead, a ninny
Cummock, a short staff with a crooked head
Curchie, a courtesy
Curler, a player at a game on the ice, practised in Scotland, called curling
Curlie, curled, whose hair falls naturally in ringlets
Curling, a well known game on the ice
Curmurring, murmuring
Curpin, the crupper

Cushat, the dove, or wood-pigeon
Cutty, short; a spoon broken in the middle
Cutty-stool, the stool of repentance

D.

DADDIE, a father
Daffin, merriment; foolishness
Daft, merry, giddy; foolish
Daimen, rare, now and then; daimen-icker, an ear of corn now and then
Dainty, pleasant, good humoured
Daise, daez, to stupify
Dales, plains, valleys
Darklins, darkling
Daud, to thrash, to abuse
Daur, to dare
Daurt, dared
Daurg, or daurk, a day's labour
Davoc, David
Dawd, a large piece
Dawtit, or dawtet, fondled, caressed
Dearies, diminutive of dears
Dearthfu', dear
Deave, to deafen
Deil-ma-care! no matter! for all that!
Deleerit, delirious
Descrive, to describe
Dight, to wipe; to clean corn from chaff
Ding, to worst, to push
Dink, neat, tidy, trim
Dinna, do not
Dirl, a slight tremulous stroke or pain
Dizen, or dizz'n, a dozen
Doited, stupified, hebetated
Dolt, stupified, crazed
Donsie, unlucky
Dool, sorrow; to sing dool, to lament, to mourn
Doos, doves
Dorty, saucy, nice
Douce, or douse, sober, wise, prudent
Doucely, soberly, prudently
Dought, was or were able
Doup, backside
Doup-skelper, one that strikes the tail
Dour and din, sullen and sallow
Doure, stout, durable; sullen, stubborn
Dow, am or are able, can
Dowff, pithless, wanting force
Dowie, worn with grief, fatigue, &c. half asleep
Downa, am or are not able cannot
Doylt, stupid
Dozent, stupified, impotent
Drap, a drop; to drop
Draigle, to soil by trailing, to draggle among wet, &c.
Drapping, dropping
Draunting, drawling; of a slow enunciation
Dreep, to ooze, to drop
Dreigh, tedious, long about it
Dribble, drizzling; slaver
Drift, a drove
Droddum, the breech
Drone, part of a bagpipe
Droop-rumpl't, that droops at the crupper
Droukit, wet
Drounting, drawling
Drouth, thirst, drought
Drucken, drunken
Drumly, muddy
Drummock, meal and water mixed in a raw state
Drunt, pet, sour humour
Dub, a small pond
Duds, rags, clothes
Duddie, ragged
Dung, worsted; pushed, driven
Dunted, beaten, boxed
Dush, to push as a ram, &c.
Dusht, pushed by a ram, ox, &c

E.

E'E, the eye
E'en, the eyes
E'ening, evening
Eerie, frighted, dreading spirits
Eild, old age
Elbuck, the elbow
Eldritch, ghastly, frightful
Eller, an elder, or church officer
En', end
Enbrugh, Edinburgh
Eneugh, enough
Especial, especially
Ettle, to try, to attempt

Eydent, diligent

F.

FA', fall; lot; to fall
Fa's, does fall; water-falls
Faddom't, fathomed
Fae, a foe
Faem, foam
Faiket, unknown
Fairn, a fairing; a present
Fallow, fellow
Fand, did find
Farl, a cake of oaten bread, &c
Fash, trouble, care; to trouble, to care for
Fasht, troubled
Fasteren-e'en, Fasten's Even
Fauld, a fold; to fold
Faulding, folding
Faut, fault
Faute, want, lack
Fawsont, decent, seemly
Feal, a field; smooth
Fearfu', frightful
Feart, frighted
Feat, neat, spruce
Fecht, to fight
Fechtin, fighting
Feck, many, plenty
Fecket, an under waistcoat with sleeves
Feckfu', large, brawny, stout
Feckless, puny, weak
Feckly, weakly
Feg, a fig
Feide, feud, enmity
Feirrie, stout, vigorous, healthy
Fell, keen, biting: the flesh immediately under the skin; a field pretty level, on the side or top of a hill
Fen, successful struggle, fight
Fend, to live comfortably
Ferlie, or ferley, to wonder; a wonder; a term of contempt
Fetch, to pull by fits
Fetch't, pulled intermittently
Fidge, to fidget
Fiel, soft, smooth
Fient, fiend, a petty oath
Fier, sound, healthy; a brother
Fissle, to make a rustling noise; to fidget: a bustle
Fit, a foot
Fittie-lan', the nearer horse of the hindmost pair in the plough
Fizz, to make a hissing noise, like fermentation
Flainen, flannel
Fleech, to supplicate in a flattering manner
Fleech'd, supplicated
Fleechin, supplicating
Fleesh, a fleece
Fleg, a kick, a random stroke
Flether, to decoy by fair words
Fletherin, flattering
Fley, to scare, to frighten
Flichter, to flutter, as young nestlings when their dam approaches
Flinders, shreds, broken pieces, splinters
Flinging-tree, a piece of timber hung by way of partition between two horses in a stable; a flail
Flisk, to fret at the yoke
Flisked, fretted
Flitter, to vibrate like the wings of small birds
Flittering, fluttering, vibrating
Flunkie, a servant in livery
Fodgel, squat and plump
Foord, a ford
Forbears, forefathers
Forbye, besides
Forfairn, distressed, worn out
Forfoughten, fatigued
Forgather, to meet, to encounter with
Forgie, to forgive
Forjesket, jaded with fatigue
Fother, fodder
Fou, full, drunk
Foughten, troubled, harassed
Fouth, plenty, enough
Fow, a bushel, &c., also a pitchfork
Free, from; off
Frammit, strange, estranged from, at enmity with
Freath, froth
Frien', friend
Fu', full
Fud, the scut, or tail of the hare, cony, &c

Fuff, to blow intermittently
Fuff't, did blow
Funnie, full of merriment
Fur, a furrow
Furm, a form, bench
Fyke, trifling cares: to piddle, to be in a fuss about trifles
Fyle, to soil, to dirty
Fyl't, soiled, dirtied.

G.

GAB, the mouth; to speak boldly, or pertly
Gaberlunzie, an old man
Gadsman, a ploughboy, the boy that drives the horses in the plough
Gae, to go; gaed, went; gaen, or gane, gone; gaun, going
Gaet, or gate, way, manner; road
Gairs, triangular pieces of cloth sewed on the bottom of a gown, &c
Gang, to go, to walk
Gar, to make, to force to
Gar't, forced to
Garten, a garter
Gash, wise, sagacious; talkative; to converse
Gashin, conversing
Gaucy, jolly, large
Gaud, a plough
Gear, riches; goods of any kind.
Geck, to toss the head in wantonness or scorn
Ged, a pike
Gentles, great folks, gentry
Genty, elegantly formed, neat
Geordie, a guinea
Get, a child, a young one
Ghaist, a ghost
Gie, to give; gied, gave; gien, given
Giftie, diminutive of gift
Giglets, playful girls
Gillie, diminutive of gill
Gilpey, a half grown, half informed boy or girl, a romping lad, a hoiden
Gimmer, a ewe from one to two years old
Gin, if; against
Gipsey, a young girl
Girn, to grin, to twist the features in rage, agony, &c
Girning, grinning
Gizz, a periwig
Glaiket, inattentive, foolish
Glaive, a sword
Gawky, half-witted, foolish, romping
Glaizie, glittering; smooth like glass
Glaum, to snatch greedily
Glaum'd, aimed, snatched
Gleck, sharp, ready
Gleg, sharp, ready
Gleib, glebe
Glen, a dale, a deep valley
Gley, a squint; to squint; a-gley, off at a side, wrong.
Glib-gabbet, smooth and ready in speech
Glint, to peep
Glinted, peeped
Glintin, peeping
Gloamin, the twilight
Glowr, to stare, to look; a stare, a look
Glowred, looked, stared
Glunsh, a frown, a sour look
Goavan, looking round with a strange, inquiring gaze; staring stupidly
Gowan, the flower of the wild daisy, hawkweed, &c
Gowany, daisied, abounding with daisies
Gowd, gold
Gowff, the game of Golf; to strike as the bat does the ball at golf
Gowff'd, struck
Gowk, a cuckoo; a term of contempt
Gowl, to howl
Grane, or grain, a groan; to groan
Grain'd and grunted, groaned and grunted
Graining, groaning
Graip, a pronged instrument for cleaning stables
Graith, accoutrements, furniture, dress, gear
Grannie, grandmother
Grape, to grope

Graipit, groped
Grat, wept, shed tears
Great, intimate, familiar
Gree, to agree; to bear the gree, to be decidedly victor
Gree't, agreed
Greet, to shed tears, to weep
Greetin, crying, weeping
Grippet, catched; seized
Groat, to get the whistle of one's groat, to play a losing game
Grousome, loathsomely grim
Grozet, a gooseberry
Grumph, a grunt; to grunt
Grumphie, a sow
Grun', ground
Grunstane, a grindstone
Gruntle, the phiz; a grunting noise
Grunzie, mouth
Grushie, thick; of a thriving growth
Gude, the Supreme Being; good
Guid, good
Guid-morning, good morrow
Guid-e'en, good evening
Guidman and guidwife, the master and mistress of the house; young guidman, a man newly married
Guid-willie, liberal; cordial
Guidfather, guidmother, father-in-law, and mother-in-law
Gully, or gullie, a large knife
Gumlie, muddy
Gusty, tasteful

H

HA', hall
Ha'-Bible, the great Bible that lies in the hall
Hae, to have
Haen, had, the participle
Haet, fient haet, a petty oath of negation; nothing
Haffet, the temple, the side of the head
Hafflins, nearly half, partly
Hag, a scar, or gulf in mosses or moors
Haggis, a kind of pudding boiled in the stomach of a cow or a sheep
Hain, to spare, to save
Hain'd, spared
Hairst, harvest
Haith, a petty oath
Haivers, nonsense, speaking without thought
Hal', or hald, an abiding place
Hale, whole, tight, healthy
Haly, holy
Hame, home
Hallun, a particular partition-wall in a cottage, or more properly a seat of turf at the outside
Hallowmas, Hallow-eve, the 31st of October
Hamely, homely, affable
Han', or haun', hand
Hap, an outer garment, mantle, plaid, &c., to wrap, to cover: to hop
Happer, a hopper
Happing, hopping
Hap step an' loup, hop skip and leap
Harkit, hearkened
Harn, very coarse linen
Hash, a fellow that neither knows how to dress nor act with propriety
Hastit, hastened
Haud, to hold
Haughs, low lying, rich lands
Haurl, to drag, to peel
Haurlin, peeling
Haverel, a half-witted person
Havins, good manners, decorum
Hawkie, a cow, properly one with a white face
Heapit, heaped
Healsome, healthful, wholesome
Hearse, hoarse
Hear't, hear it
Heather, heath
Hech! oh! strange!
Hecht, promised; to foretell something that is to be got or given; foretold; the thing foretold; offered
Heckle, a board, in which are fixed a number of sharp pins, used in dressing hemp, &c
Heeze, to elevate, to raise
Helm, the rudder or helm

Herd, to tend flocks
Herrin, a herring
Herry, to plunder
Herryment, plundering, devastation
Hersel, herself; also a herd of cattle, of any sort
Het, hot
Heugh, a crag, a coalpit
Hilch, a hobble; to halt
Hilchin, halting
Himsel, himself
Hiney, honey
Hing, to hang
Hirple, to walk lazily, to creep
Hissel, so many cattle as one person can attend
Hastie, dry; chapped; barren
Hitch, a loop, a knot
Hizzie, a hussy, a young girl
Hoddin, the motion of a sage countryman riding on a cart-horse; humble
Hog-score, a kind of distance line, in curling, drawn across the rink
Hog-shouther, a kind of horse play, by justling with the shoulder; to justle
Hool, outer skin or case, a nut shell; a peascod
Hoolie, slowly, leisurely
Hoolie! take leisure, stop
Hoord, a hoard; to hoard
Hoordit, hoarded
Horn, a spoon made of horn
Hornie, one of the many names of the devil
Host, or hoast, to cough; a cough
Hostin, coughing
Hosts, coughs
Hotch'd, turn'd topsyturvy; blended, mixed
Houghmagandie, fornication
Houlet, an owl
Housie, diminutive of house
Hove, to heave, to swell
Hoved, heaved, swelled
Howdie, a midwife
Howe, hollow; a hollow or dell
Howebackit, sunk in the back, spoken of a horse, &c.
Howff, a tippling house; a house of resort
Howk, to dig
Howkit, digged
Howkin, digging
Howlet, an owl
Hoy, to urge
Hoy't, urged
Hoyse, to pull upwards
Hoyte, to amble crazily
Hughoc, diminutive of Hugh
Hurcheon, a hedgehog
Hurdies, the loins; the crupper
Hushion, a cushion

I

I', in
Icker, an ear of corn
Ier-oe, a great-grandchild
Ilk, or ilka, each, every
Ill-willie, ill-natured, malicious, niggardly
Ingine, genius, ingenuity
Ingle, fire; fire place
Ise, I shall or will
Ither, other; one another

J

JAD, jade; also a familiar term among country folks for a giddy young girl
Jauk, to dally, to trifle
Jaukin, trifling, dallying
Jaup, a jerk of water; to jerk as agitated water
Jaw, coarse raillery; to pour out; to shut, to jerk as water
Jerkinet, a jerkin, or short gown
Jillet, a jilt, a giddy girl
Jimp, to jump; slender in the waist; handsome
Jimps, easy stays
Jink, to dodge, to turn a corner; a sudden turning; a corner
Jinker, that turns quickly; a gay sprightly girl; a wag
Jinkin, dodging
Jirk, a jerk
Jocteleg, a kind of knife
Jouk, to stoop, to bow the head
Jow, to jow, a verb which includes both the swinging motion and pealing sound of a large bell

Jundie, to justle.

K.

KAE, a daw
Kail, colewort; a kind of broth
Kail-runt, the stem of colewort
Kain, fowls, &c. paid as rent by a farmer
Kebbuck, a cheese
Keckle, to giggle; to titter
Keek, a peep, to peep
Kelpies, a sort of mischievous spirits, said to haunt fords and ferries at night, especially in storms
Ken, to know; kend or kenn'd, knew
Kennin, a small matter
Kenspeckle, well known, easily known
Ket, matted, hairy; a fleece of wool
Kilt, to truss up the clothes
Kimmer, a young girl, a gossip
Kin, kindred; kin', kind, *adj.*
King's-hood, a certain part of the entrails of an ox, &c.
Kintra, country
Kintra Cooser, country stallion
Kirn, the harvest supper; a churn
Kirsen, to christen, or baptize
Kist, a chest; a shop counter
Kitchen, any thing that eats with bread; to serve for soup, gravy, &c
Kith, kindred
Kittle, a tickle; ticklish; lively, apt
Kittlin, a young cat
Kiuttle, to cuddle
Kiuttlin, cuddling
Knaggie, like knags, or points of rocks
Knap, to strike smartly, a smart blow
Knappin-hammer, a hammer for breaking stones
Knowe, a small round hillock
Knurl, a dwarf
Kye, cows
Kyle, a district in Ayrshire
Kyte, the belly
Kythe, to discover; to show one's self

L.

LADDIE, diminutive of lad
Laggen, the angle between the side and bottom of a wooden dish
Laigh, low
Lairing, wading, and sinking in snow, mud, &c.
Laith, loath
Laithfu', bashful sheepish
Lallans, the Scottish dialect of the English language
Lambie, diminutive of lamb
Lampit, a kind of shell-fish, a limpit.
Lan', land; estate
Lane, lone; my lane, thy lane &c. myself alone, &c
Lanely, lonely
Lang, long; To think lang, to long, to weary
Lap, did leap
Lave, the rest, the remainder, the others
Laverock, the lark
Lawin, shot, reckoning, bill
Lawlan, lowland
Lea'e, to leave
Leal, loyal, true, faithful.
Lea-rig, grassy ridge
Lear, (pronounced lare), learning
Lee-lang, live-long
Leesome, pleasant
Leeze-me, a phrase of congratulatory endearment; I am happy in thee, or proud of thee
Leister, a three-prong'd dart for striking fish
Leugh, did laugh
Leuk, a look; to look
Libbet, gelded
Lift, the sky
Lightly, sneeringly; to sneer at
Lilt, a ballad; a tune; to sing
Limmer, a kept mistress, a strumpet
Limp't, limped, hobbled
Link, to trip along
Linkin, tripping
Linn, a waterfall; a precipice
Lint, flax; Lint i' the bell, flax in flower
Lintwhite, a linnet

Loan, or loanin, the place of milking
Loof, the palm of the hand
Loot, did let
Looves, plural of loof
Loun, a fellow, a ragamuffin; a woman of easy virtue
Loup, jump, leap
Lowe, a flame
Lowin, flaming
Lowrie, abbreviation of Lawrence
Lowse, to loose
Lows'd, loosed
Lug, the ear; a handle
Lugget, having a handle
Luggie, a small wooden dish with a handle
Lum, the chimney
Lunch, a large piece of cheese, flesh, &c.
Lunt, a column of smoke; to smoke
Luntin, smoking
Lyart, of a mixed colour, gray

M

MAE, more
Mair, more
Maist, most, almost
Maistly, mostly
Mak, to make
Makin, making
Mailen, a farm
Mallie, Molly
Mang, among
Manse, the parsonage house, where the minister lives
Manteele, a mantle
Mark, marks (This and several other nouns which in English require an s, to form the plural, are in Scotch, like the words sheep, deer, the same in both numbers)
Marled, variegated; spotted
Mar's year, the year 1715
Mashlum, meslin, mixed corn
Mask, to mash, as malt, &c.
Maskin-pat, a tea-pot
Maud, maad, a plaid worn by shepherds, &c.
Maukin, a hare
Maun, must
Mavis, the thrush
Maw, to mow
Mawin, mowing
Meere, a mare
Meikle, meickle, much
Melancholious, mournful
Melder, corn, or grain of any kind, sent to the mill to be ground.
Mell, to meddle. Also a mallet for pounding barley in a stone trough
Melvie, to soil with meal
Men', to mend
Mense, good manners, decorum
Menseless, ill-bred, rude, impudent
Messin, a small dog
Midden, a dunghill
Midden-hole, a gutter at the bottom of a dunghill
Mim, prim, affectedly meek
Min', mind; resemblance
Mind t, mind it; resolved, intending
Minnie, mother, dam
Mirk, mirkest, dark, darkest
Misca', to abuse, to call names
Misca'd, abused
Mislear'd, mischievous, unmannerly
Misteuk, mistook
Mither, a mother
Mixtie maxtie, confusedly mixed
Moistify, to moisten
Mony, or monie, many
Mools, dust, earth, the earth of the grave; To rake i' the mools; to lay in the dust
Moop, to nibble as a sheep
Moorlan', of or belonging to moors
Morn, the next day, to-morrow
Mou, the mouth
Moudiwort, a mole
Mousie, diminutive of mouse
Muckle, or mickle, great, big, much
Musie, diminutive of muse
Muslin-kail, broth, composed simply of water, shelled barley, and greens
Mutchkin, an English pint
Mysel, myself

N

NA, no, not, nor
Nae, no, not any
Naething, or naithin, nothing
Naig, a horse
Nane, none
Nappy, ale; to be tipsy
Negleckit, neglected
Neuk, a nook
Neist, next
Nieve, the fist
Nievefu', handful
Niffer, an exchange; to exchange, to barter
Niger, a negro
Nine-tailed-cat, a hangman's whip
Nit, a nut
Norland, of or belonging to the north
Notic't, noticed
Nowte, black cattle.

O.

O', of
Ochils, name of mountains
O haith, O faith! an oath
Ony, or onie, any
Or, is often used for ere, before
Ora, or orra, supernumerary that can be spared
O't, of it
Ourie, shivering; drooping
Oursel, oursels, ourselves
Outlers, cattle not housed
Owre, over; too.
Owre-hip, a way of fetching a blow with the hammer over the arm

P

PACK intimate, familiar; twelve stone of wool
Painch, paunch
Paitrick, a partridge
Pang, to cram
Parle, speech
Parritch, oatmeal pudding, a well-known Scotch dish
Pat, did put; a pot
Pattle, or pettle, a plough-staff
Paughty, proud, haughty
Pauky, or pawkie, cunning, sly
Pay't, paid; beat
Pech, to fetch the breath short, as in an asthma
Pechan, the crop, the stomach
Peelin, peeling, the rind of fruit
Pet, a domesticated sheep, &c.
Pettle, to cherish; a plough-staff
Philabegs, short petticoats worn by the Highlandmen
Phraise, fair speeches, flattery; to flatter
Phraisin, flattery
Pibroch, Highland war music adapted to the bagpipe
Pickle, a small quantity
Pine, pain, uneasiness
Pit, to put
Placad, public proclamation
Plack, an old Scotch coin, the third part of a Scotch penny, twelve of which make an English penny
Plackless, pennyless, without money
Platie, diminutive of plate
Plew, or pleugh, a plough
Pliskie, a trick
Poind, to seize cattle or goods for rent, as the laws of Scotland allow
Poortith, poverty
Pou, to pull
Pouk, to pluck
Poussie, a hare, or cat
Pout, a poult, a chick
Pou't, did pull
Powthery, like powder
Pow, the head, the skull
Pownie, a little horse
Powther, or pouther, powder
Preen, a pin
Prent, to print; print
Prie, to taste
Prie'd, tasted
Prief, proof
Prig, to cheapen; to dispute
Primsie, demure, precise
Propone, to lay down, to propose
Provoses, provosts
Puddock-stool, a mushroom, fungus
Pund, pound; pounds
Pyle,—a pyle o' caff, a single grain of chaff

Q.

QUAT, to quit

Quak, to quake
Quey, a cow from one to two years old

R.

RAGWEED, the herb ragwort
Raible, to rattle nonsense
Rair, to roar
Raize, to madden, to inflame
Ram-feezl'd, fatigued; overspread
Ram stam, thoughtless, forward
Raploch, properly a coarse cloth; but used as an adnoun for coarse
Rarely, excellently, very well
Rash, a rush; rash-buss, a bush of rushes
Ratton, a rat
Raucle, rash; stout; fearless
Raught, reached
Raw, a row
Rax, to stretch
Ream, cream; to cream
Reaming, brimful, frothing
Reave, rove
Reek, to heed
Rede, counsel; to counsel
Red-wat-shod, walking in blood over the shoe tops
Red-wud, stark mad
Ree, half drunk, fuddled
Reek, smoke
Reekin, smoking
Reekit, smoked; smoky
Remead, remedy
Requite, requited
Rest, to stand restive
Restit, stood restive; stunted; withered
Restricked, restricted
Rew, to repent, to compassionate
Rief, reef, plenty
Rief randies, sturdy beggars
Rig, a ridge
Rigwiddie, rigwoodie, the rope or chain that crosses the saddle of a horse to support the spokes of a cart; spare, withered, sapless
Rin, to run, to melt; Rinnin, running
Rink, the course of the stones; a term in curling on ice
Rip, a handful of unthreshed corn
Riskit, made a noise like the tearing of roots
Rockin, spinning on the rock, or distaff
Rood, stands likewise for the plural roods
Roon, a shred, a border or selvage
Roose, to praise, to commend
Roosty, rusty
Roun', round, in the circle of neighbourhood
Roupet, hoarse, as with a cold
Routhie, plentiful
Row, to roll, to wrap
Row't, rolled, wrapped
Rowte, to low, to bellow
Routh, or routh, plenty
Rowtin, lowing
Rozet, rosin
Rung, a cudgel
Runkled, wrinkled
Runt, the stem of colewort or cabbage
Ruth, a woman's name; the book so called; sorrow
Ryke, to reach

S.

SAE, so
Saft, soft
Sair, to serve; a sore
Sairly, or sairlie, sorely
Sair't, served
Sark, a shirt; a shift
Sarkit, provided in shirts
Saugh, the willow
Saul, soul
Saumont, salmon
Saunt, a saint
Saut, salt, *adj.* salt
Saw, to sow
Sawin, sowing
Sax, six
Scaith, to damage, to injure; injury
Scar, a cliff
Scaud, to scald
Scauld, to scold
Scaur, apt to be scard
Scal, a scold; a termagant
Scon, a cake of bread
Sconner, a loathin; to loathe
Scraich, to scream as a hen, &c.
Screed, to tear; a rent

Scrieve, to glide swiftly along
Scrimp, to scant
Scrimpet, did scant; scanty
See'd did see
Seizin, seizing
Sel, self; a body's sel, one's self alone
Sell't, did sell
Sen', to send
Sen't, I, &c. sent, or did send it; send it
Servan', servant
Settlin,' settling; to get a settlin, to be frighted into quietness
Sets, sets off, goes away
Shachled, distorted; shapeless
Shaird, a shred, a shard
Shangan, a stick cleft at one end for puttin the tail of a dog, &c. into the by of mischief, or to frighten him away.
Shrver, a humorous wag; a barber
Shaw, to show; a small wood in a hollow
Sheen, bright, shining
Sheep-shank; to think one's self nae sheep shank, to be conceited.
Sherra-moor, sheriff-moor, the famous battle fought in the rebellion, A.D. 1746
Sheugh, a ditch, a trench
Shiel, a sued
Shill, shrill
Shog, a shock; a push off at one one side
School, a shovel
Shoon, shoes
Snore, to offer, to threaten
Shor'd, offered
Shouther, the shoulder
Shure, did shear, shore
Sic, such
Sicker, sure, steady
Sidelins, sidelong, slanting
Siller, silver; money
Simmer, summer
Sin, a son
Sin', since
Skaith, see scaith
Skellum, worthless fellow
Skelp, to strike, to slap; to walk a smart tripping stept; a smart stroke
Skelpie-limmer, a reproachful term in female scolding
Skelpin, stepping, walking
Skiegh, or skeigh, proud, nice, highmettled
Skinklin, a small portion
Skirl, to shriek, to cry shrilly
Skirl't, shrieked
Sklen, slont; to run aslgnt, to deviate from truth
Sklented, ran, or hit, in an oblique direction
Skouth, freedom to converse without restraint; range, scope
Skriegh, a scream; to scream
Skyrin, shining
Skyte, force
Slae, a sloe
Slade, did slide
Slap, a gate; a breach in a fence
Slaver, saliva; to emit saliva
Slaw, slow
Slee, sly: sleest, sliest
Sleekit, sleek; sly
Sliddery, slippery
Slype, to fall over, as a wet furrow from the plough
Slypet, fell
Sma,' small
Smeddum, dust, powder; mettle, sense
Smiddy, a smithy
Smoor, to smother
Smoor'd, smothered
Smoutie, smutty, obscene, ugly
Smytrie, a numerous collection of small individuals
Snapper, to stumble
Snash, abuse, Billingsgate
Snaw, snow; to snow
Snaw-broo, melted snow
Snawie, snowy
Sneck, snick, the latch of a door
Sned, to lop, to cut off
Sneeshin, snuff
Sneeshin-mill, a snuff-box.
Snell, bitter, biting
Snick-drawing, trick-contriving, crafty

Snirtle, to laugh restrainedly
Snood, a ribbon for binding the hair
Snool, one whose spirit is broken with oppressive slavery; to submit tamely, to sneak
Snoove, to go smoothly and constantly; to sneak
Snowk, to scent, or snuff, as a dog, &c.
Snowkit, scented, snuffed
Sonsie, having sweet, engaging looks; lucky, jolly
Soom, to Swim.
Sooth, truth, a petty oath
Sough, a heavy sigh, a sound dying in the ear.
Souple, flexible; swift
Souter, a shoemaker
Sowens, a dish made of oatmeal; the seeds of oatmeal soured, &c. flummery
Sowp, a spoonful, a small quantity of any thing liquid
Sowth, to try over a tune with a low whistle
Sowther, solder; to solder, to cement
Spae, to prophesy, to divine.
Spaul, a limb.
Spairge, to dash, to soil, as with mire
Spaviet, having the spavin
Spean, spane, to wean
Speat, or spate, a sweeping torrent, after rain, or thaw
Speel, to climb
Spence the country parlour
Spier, to ask, to inquire
Spier't, inquired
Splatter, a splutter, to splutter
Spleughan, tobacco-pouch
Splore, a frolic; a noise, riot
Sprackle, sprachle, to clamber
Sprattle, to scramble
Spreckled, spotted, speckled
Spring, a quick air in music; a Scottish reel
Sprit, a tough-rooted plant, something like rushes
Sprittie, full of sprits
Spunk, fire, mettle; wit
Spunkie, mettlesome, fiery; will-o'wisp, or ignis fatuus
Spurtle, a stick, used in making oatmeal pudding or porridge
Squad, a crew, a party
Squatter, to flutter in water, as a wild duck
Squattle, to sprawl
Squeel, a scream, a screech; to scream
Stacher, to stagger
Stack, a rick of corn, hay, &c.
Staggie, the diminutive of stag
Stalwart, strong, stout
Stan, to stand; stan't, did stand
Stane, a stone
Stang, to sting; an acute pain
Stank, did stink
Stap, stop
Stark, stout
Startle, to run as cattle stung by the gad-fly
Staumrel, a blockhead
Staw, did steal; to surfeit
Stech, to cram the belly
Stechin, cramming
Steek, to shut; a stitch
Stear, to molest; to stir
Steeve, firm, compacted
Stell, a still
Sten, to rear as a horse
Sten't, reared
Stents, tribute
Stey, steep; steyest, steepest
Stibble, stubble; stibble-rig, the reaper in harvest who takes the lead
Stick an' stow, totally, altogether
Stile, a crutch; to halt, to limp
Stimpart, the eighth part of a Winchester bushel
Stirk, a cow or bullock a year old
Stock, a plant or root of colewort, cabbage, &c.
Stockin, a stocking; Throwing the stockin, when the bride and bridegroom are put into bed, and the candle out, the former throws a stocking at random among the company, and the person whom it strikes is the next that will be married.
Stoiter, to stagger, to stammer
Stooked, made up in shocks as corn

Stoor, sounding hollow, strong, and hoarse
Stot, an ox
Stoup, or stowp, a kind of jug or dish with a handle.
Stoure, dust, more particularly dust in motion
Stowlins, by stealth
Stown, stolen
Stoyte, to stumble
Strack, did strike
Strae, straw; to die a fair strae death, to die in bed
Straik, did strike
Straikit, stroked
Strappin, tall and handsome
Straught, straight
Streek, stretched, tight
Striddle, to straddle
Stroam, to spout, to piss
Studdie, an anvil
Stumpie, diminutive of stump
Strunt, spirituous liquor of any kind; to walk sturdily; huff, sullenness
Stuff, corn or pulse of any kind
Sturt, trouble; to molest
Sturtin, frighted
Sucker, sugar
Sud, should
Sugh, the continued rushing noise of wind or water.
Southron, southern; an old name for the English nation
Swaird, sward
Swall'd, swelled
Swank, stately, jolly
Swankie, or swanker, a tight strappin young fellow or girl
Swap, an exchange; to barter
Swarf, to swoon; a swoon
Swat, did sweat
Swatch, a sample
Swats, drink; good ale
Sweaten, sweating
Sweer, lazy, averse; dead-sweer, extremely averse
Swoor, swore, did swear
Swinge, to beat; to whip
Swirl, a curve; an eddying blast, or pool; a knot in wood
Swirlie, knaggie, full of knots
Swith, get away
Swither, to hesitate in choice; an irresolute wavering in choice
Syne, since, ago; then

T

TACKETS, a kind of nails for driving into the heels of shoes
Tae, a toe; three tae'd, having three prongs
Tairge, a target
Tak, to take; takin, taking
Tamtallan, the name of a mountain
Tangle, a sea-weed
Tap, the top
Tapetless, heedless, foolish
Tarrow, to murmur at one's allowance
Tarrow't, murmured
Tarry-breeks, a sailor
Tauld, or tald, told
Taupie, a foolish, thoughtless young person
Tauted, or tautie, matted together; spoken of hair or wool
Tawie, that alows itself peaceably to be handled; spoken of a horse, cow, &c.
Teat, a small quantity
Teen, to provoke, provocation
Tedding, spreading after the mower
Ten-hours bite, a slight feed to the horses while in the yoke, in the forenoon
Tent, a field-pulpit; heed, caution; to take heed; to tend or herd cattle
Tentie, heedful, cautious
Tentless, heedless
Teugh, tough
Thack, thatch; thack an' rape, clothing necessaries
Thae, these
Thairms, small guts; fiddle-strings
Thankit, thanked
Theekit, thatched
Thegither, together
Themsel, themselves
Thick, intimate, familiar

Thieveless, cold, dry, spited; spoken of a person's demeanour
Thir, these
Thirl, thrill
Thirled, thrilled, vibrated
Thole, to suffer, to endure
Thowe, a thaw; to thaw
Thowless, slack, lazy
Thrang, throng; a crowd
Thrapple, throat, windpipe
Thrave, twenty-four sheaves or two shocks of corn; a considerable number
Thraw, to sprain, to twist; to contradict
Thrawin, twisting, &c.
Thrawn, sprained, twisted; contradicted
Threap, to maintain by dint of assertion
Threshin, thrashing
Threteen, thirteen
Thristle, thistle
Through, to go on with; to make out.
Throuther, pell-mell, confusedly
Thud, to make a loud intermittent noise
Thumpit, thumped
Thysel, thyself
Till't, to it
Timmer, timber
Tine, to loose; tint, lost
Tinkler, a tinker
Tint the gate, lost the way
Tip, a ram
Tippence, twopence
Tirl, to make a slight noise; to uncover
Tirlin, uncovering
Tither, the other
Tittle, to whisper
Tittlin, whispering
Tocher, marriage portion
Tod, a fox
Toddle, to totter, like the walk of a child,
Toddlin, tottering
Toom, empty, to empty
Toop, a ram
Toun, a hamlet; a farm-house
Tout, the blast of a horn or trumpet; to blow a horn, &c.

Tow, a rope
Towmond, a twelvemonth
Towzie, rough, and shaggy
Toy, a very old fashion of female head-dress
Toyte, to totter like old age
Transmugrified, transmigrated, metamorphosed
Trashtrie, trash
Trews, trowsers
Trickie, full of tricks
Trig, spruce, neat
Trimly, excellently
Trow, to believe
Trowth, truth, a petty oath
Tryste, an appointment; a fair
Trysted, appointed; To tryste to make an appointment
Try't, tried
Tug, raw hide, of which in old times ploughtraces were frequently made
Tulzie, a quarrel; to quarrel, to fight.
Twa, two
Twa-three, a few
Twad, it would
'Twal, twelve; twal-pennie worth a small quantity, a pennieworth
N. B. One penny English is 12d Scotch
Twin, to part
Tyke, a dog

U

UNCO, strange, uncouth; very, very great, prodigious
Uncos, news
Unkenn'd, unknown
Unsicker, unsure, unsteady
Unskaith'd, undamaged, unhurt
Unweeting, unwittingly, unknowingly
Upo', upon
Urchin, a hedgehog

V

VAP'RIN, vapouring
Vera, very
Virl, a ring round a column, &c
Vittle, corn of all kinds, food

W

WA', wall; wa's, walls
Wabster, a weaver.

Wad, would; to bet, a pledge
Wadna, would not
Wae, wo; sorrowful
Waefu', woful, sorrowful, wailing
Waesucks! or waes me! alas! O the pity
Waft, the cross thread that goes from the shuttle through the web; woof
Wair, to lay out, to expend.
Wale, choice; to choose
Waled, chose, chosen
Walie, ample, large, jolly; also an interjection of distress
Wame, the belly
Wamefu', a belly-full
Wanchancie, unlucky
Wanrestfu', restless
Wark, work
Wark-lume, a tool to work with
Warl, or warld, world
Warlock, a wizard
Warly, worldly, eager on amassing wealth
Warran, a warrant; to warrant
Warst, worst
Warstl'd or warsl'd, wrestled
Wastrie, prodigality
Wat, wet; I wat, I wot, I know
Water-brose, brose made of mea and water simply, without the addition of milk, butter &c.
Wattle, a twig, a wand
Wauble, to swing, to reel
Waught, a draught
Waukit, thickened as fullers do cloth
Waukrife, not apt to sleep
Waur, worse; to worst
Waur't, worsted
Wean, or weanie, a child
Wearie, or weary; many a weary body, many a different person
Weason, weasand
Weaving the stocking. See Stocking, p. 583
Wee, little; Wee things, little ones; Wee bit, a small matter
Weel, well; Weelfare, welfare
Weet, rain, wetness
Weird, fate
We'se, we shall
Wha, who
Whaizle, to wheeze
Whalpit, whelped
Whang, a leathern string; a piece of cheese, bread, &c. to give the strappado
Whare, where; Whare'er, wherever
Wheep, to fly nimbly, jerk; penny-wheep, small beer
Whase, whose
Whatreck, nevertheless
Whid, the motion of a hare, running but not frighted; a lie
Whiddin, running as a hare or cony
Whigmeleeries, whims, fancies, crotchets
Whingin, crying, complaining, fretting
Whirligigums, useless ornaments, trifling appendages
Whissle, a whistle; to whistle
Whisht, silence; to hold one's whisht, to be silent
Whisk, to sweep, to lash
Whiskit, lashed
Whitter, a hearty draught of liquor
Whun-stane, a whin-stone
Whyles, whiles, sometimes
Wi', with
Wicht, wight, powerful, strong; inventive; of a superior genius
Wick, to strike a stone in an oblique direction; a term in curling
Wicher, willow (the smaller sort)
Wiel, a small whirlpool
Wifie, a diminutive or endearing term for wife
Wilyart, bashful and reserved; avoiding society or appearing awkward in it, wild, strange, timid
Wimple, to meander
Wimpl't, meandered
Wimplin, waving, meandering
Win, to win, to winnow
Win't winded as a bottom of yarn
Win', wind; Win's, winds

Winna, will not
Winnock, a window
Winsome, hearty, vaunted, gay
Wintle, a staggering motion; to stagger, to reel
Winze, an oath
Wiss, to wish
Withoutten, without
Wizen'd, hide-bound, dried, shrunk
Wonner, a wonder; a contemptuous appellation
Wons, dwells
Woo', wool
Woo, to court, to make love to
Woodie, a rope, more properly one made of withes or willows
Wooer-bab, the garter knotted below the knee with a couple of loops
Wordy, worthy
Worset, worsted
Wow, an exclamation of pleasure or wonder
Wrack, to teaze, to vex
Wraith, a spirit, or ghost; an apaparition exactly like a living person, whose appearance is said to forbode the person's approaching death.
Wrang, wrong; to wrong
Wreeth, a drifted heap of snow
Wud, mad, distracted
Wumble, a wimble
Wyle, to beguile
Wyliecoat, a flannel vest
Wyte, blame; to blame

Y

YAD, an old mare; a worn out horse
Ye; this pronoun is frequently used for thou
Yearns, longs much
Yearlings, born in the same year, coevals
Year is used both for singular and plural years
Yearn, earn, an eagle, an ospray
Yell, barren, that gives no milk
Yerk, to lash, to jerk
Yerkit, jerked, lashed
Yestreen, yesternight
Yett, a gate, such as is usually at the entrance into a farm-yard or field
Yill, ale
Yird, earth
Yokin, yoking; a bout
Yont, beyond
Yoursel, yourself
Yowe, a ewe
Yowie, diminutive of yowe
Yule, Christmas

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